



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
Administration for Children and Families  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Children's Bureau

# **Child and Family Services Reviews**

## **Procedures Manual**



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**U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Administration for Children and Families  
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Children's Bureau**

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Framework for the Child and Family Services Reviews**

### **A. Purpose of the Reviews**

The 1994 Amendments to the Social Security Act authorized the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to review State child and family service programs in order to ensure substantial conformity with the State plan requirements in titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act. Title IV-B of the Social Security Act and 45 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 1357.15 require States to submit child and family services plans (CFSP), i.e., State title IV-B plans, to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) that include many of the requirements included in the child and family services reviews. The reviews cover child protective services, foster care, adoption, family preservation and family support, and independent living.

In addition to reviewing for the State's substantial conformity with applicable requirements, the reviews are designed to help States improve child welfare services and the outcomes for families and children who receive services by identifying strengths and needs within State programs, as well as areas where technical assistance can lead to program improvements. Other purposes of the reviews include the following:

- Ensure that Federal funds are spent in accordance with Federal statute, regulation, and policy
- Link the reviews to the joint planning, technical assistance, and program improvement processes that exist between States and Regional Offices
- Assist States to become self-evaluating over time
- Assemble data that will inform national policy
- Provide timely and specific feedback to States that is directly related to program performance and outcomes

## **B. Conceptual Framework**

The child and family services reviews are based on a number of central principles and concepts, including the following:

- The child and family services reviews are a collaborative effort between the State and Federal governments. A review team composed of both State and Federal staff conducts the reviews and evaluates State performance.
- The reviews rely on information from a variety of sources in making decisions about a State's performance. The sources of information include a statewide assessment, completed by State members of the review team; onsite reviews of a sample of children and families served by the State; statewide aggregate data; and interviews with State and community representatives.
- The reviews examine State programs from two perspectives: First, the reviews cover outcomes of services provided to children and families served by the State agency. Second, they cover systemic factors that have an effect on the agency's ability to help children and families achieve positive outcomes.
- The reviews are designed to capture both the strengths and needs of State programs. With a strong emphasis on using the reviews to drive program improvements, the reviews identify the strengths of State programs that can be used to make improvements in other program areas, where needed.
- The reviews promote practice principles believed to support improved outcomes for children and families, such as family-centered practice, community-based services, strengthening parental capacity to protect and provide for their children, and individualizing services that respond to the unique needs of children and families.
- The reviews emphasize accountability. While the review process includes opportunities for States to make program improvements before having Federal funds withheld due to nonconformity, there are significant penalties associated with the failure to make the improvements needed to attain substantial conformity.

## **C. Structure of the Reviews**

There are two phases included in the child and family services reviews: the statewide assessment, which the State completes during the 6-month period prior to the onsite review, and the onsite review.

In examining outcomes, State child and family services programs are reviewed in both phases of the review process, with the information gathered from both phases

contributing to the overall evaluation plan and plan for program improvement. The outcomes included in the reviews fall into three domains: safety, permanency, and child and family well-being. Within each domain, specific outcomes are assessed through the onsite review and statewide assessment. The outcomes are as follows:

- **Safety**
  - Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.
  - Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.
- **Permanency**
  - Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.
  - The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.
- **Child and Family Well-Being**
  - Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.
  - Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.
  - Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

In the first phase of the review, the State members of the review team complete a statewide assessment, using statewide aggregate data to evaluate the programs under review, and address the other requirements subject to review. In the second phase, the onsite review examines outcomes for a sample of children and families served by the State. The onsite review addresses specific outcomes through a focus on the quality of services and practice.

A set of performance indicators is used to evaluate each of the outcomes listed above (see appendix A), based on information from each case reviewed onsite and data in the statewide assessment. The performance indicators are in two forms: one includes qualitative items that are evaluated through case reviews conducted onsite in the State, and the other includes statewide aggregate data obtained from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS).

A combination of performance indicators is used to assess the achievement of each outcome. For example, in evaluating the outcome “children are, first and foremost,

protected from abuse and neglect,” the performance indicators for this outcome include the following statewide aggregate data:

- The recurrence of maltreatment statewide
- The incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care statewide

In addition, the reviewer considers the following performance indicators gathered on each individual case during the onsite review to evaluate this same outcome:

- The timeliness of initiating investigations following the receipt of a report of suspected abuse or neglect
- The recurrence of maltreatment of the child

In a similar manner, the review of systemic factors occurs at two levels. First, the statewide assessment includes an evaluation by the State members of the review team of the requirements related to each systemic factor covered in the review. Second, during the onsite review, members of the review team interview selected community stakeholders to determine how well each of the systemic factors functions in the State.

The systemic factors examined in the reviews include the following:

- Statewide information system
- Case review system
- Quality assurance system
- Staff training
- Service array
- Agency responsiveness to community
- Foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention

The reviews evaluate a set of State plan requirements and other program requirements for each of the systemic factors. Decisions about the State’s substantial conformity with the systemic factors are based on the satisfactory implementation of those requirements in the State.

## D. Steps in the Review Process

A summary of the timeframes for the major activities in the child and family services review is provided in appendix J. The following steps in the review process include both State and Federal roles and some joint responsibilities:

- **Determine the dates for the review.** The Central Office and Regional Office determine the dates for the review in collaboration with State officials. Reviews must be conducted within the timeframes specified in the final regulation governing the frequency of State reviews.
- **Form the review team.** This involves identifying State and Federal members of the review team, along with individuals from the State who are not staff of the State agency. This step also includes identifying peer reviewers, selected from a nationwide pool of reviewers, maintained under contract, who supplement the Federal review team.
- **Transmit data profiles, pulled from AFCARS and NCANDS, to the State.** In order to reduce the burden on States, the Federal government compiles data submitted by the State to NCANDS and AFCARS into reports that the States use in completing their statewide assessment. If the State does not have complete AFCARS or NCANDS data, it must provide the required data from an approved alternate source.
- **Complete the statewide assessment.** State members of the review team, including those members who are not State staff, analyze the data provided through AFCARS and NCANDS and address the outcomes and systemic factors included in the statewide assessment.
- **Designate locations for the onsite review activities.** The Regional Office and the State jointly identify three locations in the State where the onsite review activities will occur. The State's largest metropolitan subdivision is a required location, and the other two locations are determined from information in the statewide assessment (see chapter 3, D.1).
- **Select the sample and types of cases to be reviewed on site.** The exact number of cases to be reviewed, by location and type of case, i.e., foster care or inhome, will be determined jointly by the Regional Office and the State, based on information in the statewide assessment.
- **Prepare and disseminate the preliminary assessment.** The Regional Office prepares an analysis of the statewide assessment on the Summary of Findings Form (see appendix F). The Regional Office provides the preliminary assessment to the peer reviewer contractor for distribution to all members of the review team.

- **Prepare for the onsite review.** The State, in collaboration with the Regional Office, schedules local stakeholder interviews, prepares reviewer schedules, and plans logistical arrangements, e.g., hotels and transportation for State review team members and space for meetings and review activities. The State also pulls the 30–50 cases for the onsite review from the total sample of 150 foster care cases and 150 inhome cases randomly identified by the Central Office. The Regional Office, in collaboration with the Central Office, the State, and the peer review contractor as needed, assigns team members to local sites, provides orientation or training needed by review team members, and disseminates review materials to the team members before the onsite review.
- **Onsite review in the State.** The review is completed in 1 week by a joint State and Federal review team.
- **Complete and issue the final report.** The Regional Office prepares and distributes the final report of the review, which includes the written determination of substantial conformity, within 30 calendar days of the onsite review or within 30 calendar days of resolving any discrepancies encountered between information in the onsite review and the statewide assessment.
- **Develop the program improvement plan.** The State, in collaboration with the Regional Office, develops a program improvement plan that covers all areas of nonconformity, as determined in the review, and submits the plan to the Regional Office for approval within 90 calendar days of receiving written notice of nonconformity.
- **Implement the program improvement plan.** The State implements the approved program improvement plan, technical assistance is provided through the sources identified in the plan, and the Regional Office monitors implementation of the plan through quarterly reports and other methods addressed in the plan.
- **Withhold Federal funds for nonconformity.** If the State fails to make improvements needed to bring areas of nonconformity into substantial conformity, Federal funds are withheld from the State commensurate with the level of nonconformity.
- **Conduct subsequent reviews.** For States determined to be in substantial conformity, rereviews are conducted at 5-year intervals, with an interim statewide assessment prepared by the State 3 years following the onsite review. States determined not to be in substantial conformity are rereviewed at 2-year intervals.

## Chapter 2

### The Review Team

#### A. Composition of the Review Team

The State should begin to identify the State members of the review team approximately 8 months prior to the onsite review (see timeframes in appendix J). The purposes of starting at that point are to have the key review team members from the State agency and those State members who are not staff of the State agency in place to begin the statewide assessment 6 months prior to the onsite review and to provide initial orientation of those members of the team. Some team members will not be identified until closer to the onsite review, i.e., staff of the local sites selected for the reviews based on the completed statewide assessment.

A team of individuals, including the following members, conducts the reviews:

- Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Central and Regional Office staff
- State central office and local office staff
- Representatives external to the State agency with whom the State was required to consult in the development of its title IV-B State plan
- Peer reviewers selected from a national pool of reviewers maintained under contract to supplement the Federal review team

The team may also include cross-Regional or cross-State representatives, at the expense of the Region or State sending staff on the review. States and Regions preparing to conduct reviews may find it helpful to send staff to reviews in other States and Regions to help prepare and train them. States or Regions interested in participating in other reviews will make their requests through the Regional Office that is leading the review.

Staff of the federally funded National Resource Centers and other technical assistance providers who may be working with the State on program improvement planning are not included on the review team, in order to avoid possible conflicts of interest if the States are later in a position to purchase technical assistance from the providers. The review teams comprise approximately 25 people, more if needed, at least half of whom are State representatives (both State staff and external representatives from the State). There is a designated Federal team leader for the review team, in addition to local team leaders for each of the three local sites in the State where review activities occur. Also, there are team members designated to perform quality assurance functions during the onsite review in order to ensure consistency and objectivity in reviewing cases.

The reviews encourage cross-system coordination and consultation in States, as promoted by the title IV-B, sub-part 2 planning process, by including review team members from outside the State agency who represent the planning team that develops the State's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). Examples of the external representatives the State agency may consider having on the team include foster parents, university social work educators, advocates, coordinators of State child welfare initiatives or projects, tribal representatives, and staff of private and public agencies.

Through arrangements with the Federal government, a contractor will maintain a pool of prospective peer reviewers nationwide. Having access to such a pool of reviewers will help ensure that the review team is composed of individuals who have the knowledge, background, and preparation to conduct qualitative reviews of State child and family service programs. The peer reviewers are not to be confused with State members of the review team who are not State agency staff members. The peer reviewers used through a Federal contract will be used to supplement Federal members of the review team.

## **B. Functions of the Review Team**

Membership on the review team involves a significant commitment of time and effort. State members of the team must be in a position that enables them to work closely with the State in preparing the statewide assessment and fulfill all the responsibilities noted below through the onsite review.

The State members of the review team are responsible for completing the statewide assessment within the timeframes specified in the regulation by submitting the completed statewide assessment to the Regional Office for approval no later than 60 days before the onsite review. For that reason, the State members of the team should be identified before work begins on the statewide assessment. State members of the team who are not directly involved in writing the statewide assessment may be involved in other ways, such as reviewing the data included in the statewide assessment, attending meetings to provide input, submitting information on selected items, and reviewing and commenting on drafts as requested by the State agency.

Following the completion of the statewide assessment, the functions and responsibilities of both State and Federal review team members include the following:

- Review the completed statewide assessment in preparation for the onsite review
- Participate in any scheduled orientation or training sessions prior to or during the review
- Remain present in the review site(s) for the entire week of the onsite review, including participation in all scheduled review activities from the entrance conference through the exit conference



- Conduct all assigned activities associated with review of case records and interviews, including completion of the review instruments
- Participate in focus groups, open forums, or other group meetings scheduled during the onsite review
- Attend daily briefings of the local review teams, and present information on cases reviewed or stakeholders interviewed
- Assist in compiling a summary of the team's findings during the onsite review
- Turn in completed review instruments on assigned cases and interviews prior to departing the review site at the end of the onsite review
- Remain available for telephone consultation following the review, if needed, in order to clarify or supplement information recorded on the instruments

### **C. Leadership of the Review Team**

The team leader for the review will be a Federal staff member of the Regional Office. The major responsibilities of the team leader and staff assisting the team leader include the following:

- Serve as liaison with State leadership in planning review activities
- Ensure that the statewide assessment and accompanying data are sent to the State on a timely basis and received back in time to plan the onsite review
- Prepare an analysis (preliminary assessment) of the statewide assessment 30 days before the onsite review and record it on the Summary of Findings Form
- Plan the details of the onsite review with State and Central Office representatives, including arranging conference calls as needed and transmitting review instructions and procedures to State liaisons
- Work in collaboration with the peer review contractor for the reviews to ensure that all documents needed for the review, including the preliminary assessment, instruments, handouts, instructions and orientation materials are available and delivered to the State administration and members of the review team in time for the onsite review
- Provide leadership for entrance and exit conferences at the beginning and conclusion of the onsite review

- Ensure that local site team leaders (see below) are aware of their responsibilities during the onsite review
- Coordinate the development, revision, circulation, and release of the final report of the review (which includes the written notification to the State regarding substantial conformity) with the Central Office
- Work with designated State staff toward development of the program improvement plan

During the onsite review, the review team will be divided into smaller “local” teams that are assigned to different geographical areas in the State. There should be a local site coordinator, who is a State staff member, in each of the three review locations in the State who handles logistical arrangements, sets up interviews, and so forth. This person may or may not actually be on the review team. Each local team will also have a designated local team leader, who is a Federal representative, with the following responsibilities:

- Provide strong positive leadership to the team through setting the pace of work for the week, assisting members to resolve problems with their cases or schedules, supporting the team in all ways to complete the work, and promoting a positive and objective approach to the review
- Coordinate the review schedule with local agency staff, e.g., communicate with the local site coordinator to: (1) confirm interview arrangements, and (2) develop schedules, including for local entrance and exit conferences
- Coordinate team members’ responsibilities for case record reviews; interviews; and other review activities in the local sites, including reassigning members with gaps in their schedules to other tasks
- Provide leadership for entrance and exit conferences with staff of the local review sites
- Convene and lead daily briefings with local team members
- Provide leadership for any scheduled focus groups, open forums, or discussion groups arranged as part of the local review work
- Perform a quality assurance review of all onsite review instruments (see appendix C) and stakeholder interview guides (see appendix D), as they are completed, in order to identify missing information and inconsistencies in completing the instruments, and ensure that the performance indicators are used correctly to rate outcomes (if the team leader must have assistance with this function, (s)he may select another team member who is experienced in the reviews to assist)

- Ensure that team members complete all assigned review functions, including completing and submitting all instruments, prior to departing the local review site
- Coordinate the completion of the Summary of Findings Form for the local team at the end of the review week, including providing all local team members with opportunities for input into the document
- Submit local team members' completed instruments and the team's Summary of Findings Form to the designated team leader prior to departing the State at the end of the review week
- Participate in review activities by reading case records and conducting interviews



# Chapter 3

## Statewide Assessment

### A. Purpose of the Statewide Assessment

The statewide assessment is the first phase of the review process. It provides States an opportunity to examine data relating to their programs and to consider the data in light of programmatic goals and outcomes for children and families served by the State. The statewide assessment requires State review team members to consider the State's success in helping children and families achieve positive outcomes in the areas of safety, permanency, and well-being. The statewide assessment process leads to identification of the areas where the State is performing well and those areas that need further examination through the onsite review.

The statewide assessment includes data that the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) extracts from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) (Detailed Case Data Component data), or another approved source of data in the absence of these sources, and transmits to the State in report format. The data included in the statewide assessment assist States to examine service populations from two different perspectives:

- First, the NCANDS and AFCARS data provide point-in-time profiles of the foster care and child protective service populations that include all children in the State who are included in the AFCARS and NCANDS databases. The profiles provide States with information on the status of the service populations as of a given date.
- Second, AFCARS data are also used to provide States with information on the cohort group of children entering foster care for the first time in their lives during the period under review. Through these data, States have the opportunity to begin tracking progress in certain areas longitudinally.

In part, the value of examining data on the cohort group of children who enter foster care for the first time in the State is that the effects of the agency's practices and policies, particularly with respect to family preservation, time-limited reunification efforts, and permanency planning, are more easily discernible for a group of children recently entering foster care for the first time than for the entire foster care population. The State's total foster care population will include children who entered foster care several years ago and children who have had multiple entries into foster care. These differences among children in foster care make it difficult to identify the most typical experience of children recently entering foster care in the State. If the data are available, for each statewide assessment, we will provide data on the cohort group of children entering foster

care for the first time in each of 3 years, so that the State can compare changes for first-time entries over time.

Since the cohort profiles only include data on children entering foster care for the first time during a given year, we must also use point-in-time data profiles that provide information on all children in foster care in the State. Using both profiles, States can evaluate the status of all children served by the agency, as well as gain insight into where program improvements are most needed based on recent data and practice.

The data profiles also include statewide aggregate data indicators that are used to determine substantial conformity. The Children's Bureau will establish national standards for each of the statewide aggregate data indicators used to determine substantial conformity. When a State is undergoing a child and family services review, the State and the Regional Office will compare the State's data for the period under review with the national standards and determine the State's compliance with the standards.

## **B. Completing the Statewide Assessment**

The Regional Office transmits the statewide assessment instrument and accompanying data to the State for review and completion approximately 6 months prior to the onsite review (see appendix B). States also have ongoing access to the final version of the instrument through the Children's Bureau Web site at <[www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb)>. (State-specific data used in the statewide assessment are not available on the Internet.) The State must return the completed statewide assessment to the Regional Office no later than 60 days prior to the scheduled onsite review.

AFCARS and NCANDS submissions from the States do not correspond to the same time periods, i.e., AFCARS is submitted on a fiscal year basis and NCANDS is submitted by calendar year. Also, NCANDS submissions, which are voluntary, are a year behind AFCARS submissions. The data from these two sources will, therefore, be based on fiscal year AFCARS data and calendar year NCANDS data, leaving approximately a 3-month time difference in the data included in the permanency and safety profiles.

If a State does not submit data to NCANDS, the State and the Regional Office must agree on an alternate source of statewide data to be used in the safety profile for the statewide assessment. Also, for its first review, if the State has incomplete AFCARS data, an alternate source of data, approved by the ACF, may be used to generate the foster care data profiles. In the absence of AFCARS or NCANDS data, the Regional Office must request that the State submit its alternate source of data to the Regional Office 8 months prior to the onsite review in order to allow time to approve the data and transmit it to the Children's Bureau to prepare the profiles. The Regional Office must either approve or

disapprove the alternate data. The criteria for approving or disapproving the alternate data include:

- The source of the data, i.e., the Regional Office must ensure that the data accurately represent the State's service population.
- The alternate sources must provide the same data as would have been provided by NCANDS and AFCARS if the State had made complete submissions.

Since some of the data elements on the data profiles are used to determine the State's substantial conformity, failure to provide the needed data, in the absence of AFCARS and NCANDS data, could result in a determination that the State is not in substantial conformity on the outcomes to which those data elements apply.

When the Regional Office has approved the alternate source of data for the profiles, it will transmit the data to the statisticians in the Children's Bureau who will use it to prepare the profiles. The Children's Bureau will prepare the profiles and send them to the Regional Office. The Regional Office will then transmit the profiles and the statewide assessment form to the State 6 months prior to the onsite review.

In addition to statewide aggregate data, the statewide assessment includes a series of narrative-style questions. The State's review team should be in place to conduct the statewide assessment and should be the primary group that responds to the narrative questions.

The responsibilities of the State members of the review team at this point include the following:

- Analyzing the data
- Meeting to discuss the data and the issues behind the data
- Developing responses to questions about the data, in consultation with sources outside the review team as needed

The review team must include representatives outside the State title IV-B/IV-E agency in order to provide a broad perspective on the items in the statewide assessment (see chapter 2). In completing the statewide assessment, States have the option of gathering information through focus groups with stakeholders or consumer groups, surveys, joint planning forums within the State, or otherwise connecting the statewide assessment with ongoing consultation through their title IV-B planning process.

In analyzing the data profiles, the State members engage in the following activities:

- Review the statewide aggregate data related to each outcome. The team will identify areas of strength or need for further review onsite. The team members

will attempt to identify the reasons for the status of certain data indicators. For example, under Permanency Outcome #1, “children have permanency and stability in their living situations,” the State will examine the data on the number of placement settings experienced by children during their current episode of foster care. If the data are available through AFCARS and NCANDS, the State will have 3 years of data on this indicator and will be able to identify whether the indicator is moving in the desired direction. In order to understand the reasons behind the numbers, however, the State will have to look further. For example, the State may have other data that help explain the number of placement settings that children experience, or it may have to review a sample of cases to identify the reasons, or interview caseworkers or foster families.

- Compare the State’s performance on statewide aggregate data with the national standards, where applicable. For those statewide aggregate data indicators used to determine substantial conformity, the State will compare its data with the national standard and begin to determine the reasons behind the numbers as described above. The importance of understanding the factors that affect these numbers, in particular, lies in the requirement that the State implement a program improvement plan that addresses the numbers that fall below the national standard.
- Use the data to identify areas of strength and areas needing further review. The State will need to examine the data in a manner that identifies the program areas that are most in need of further review onsite. For example, if the State members of the review team identify safety as a major concern, they can work with the Regional Office to structure the sample of cases for the onsite review in a way that is likely to capture the safety issues. In this same example, the State will also need to suggest those locations in the State, other than the State’s largest metropolitan subdivision which is a required review location, where either the most typical or the most needed observations of the safety issues can be made, depending upon the strengths and needs identified in the statewide assessment.
- Use supplemental data, other than the NCANDS and AFCARS profiles, to review other outcomes and systemic factors. Since the NCANDS and AFCARS profiles only cover the permanency and safety outcomes, any other data that the State can produce that address the remaining outcomes and the systemic factors will increase the State’s ability to understand the factors that affect its performance.

### **C. Technical Assistance With the Statewide Assessment**

The State has an opportunity to build its capacity for continuous program evaluation and improvement by using the statewide assessment to examine progress on the basis of data. Although some States have the analytical capacity in place to examine and interpret data, others will need assistance in interpreting and manipulating the data, comparing indicators, and relating indicators to outcome measures. To the extent possible, the



Federal government will provide technical assistance to States in developing the ability to analyze the data. This assistance may be in the form of Federal staff helping to analyze the statewide assessment; conference calls to discuss the analysis of the information; or access to other sources of technical assistance, such as the National Resource Center for Information Technology in Child Welfare. States will be encouraged to integrate the statewide assessment process into their ongoing quality assurance and program review functions.

## **D. Reviewing the Statewide Assessment and Preparing the Preliminary Assessment**

The Regional Office will review the entire statewide assessment to ensure that it is complete and it addresses all areas appropriately. If critical information is missing or not adequately covered in the statewide assessment, the Regional Office may ask the State to address those areas more completely.

Upon receiving the completed statewide assessment, the Regional Office will review the document and use the information in two ways.

First, in collaboration with the State, the Regional Office will make certain decisions about the onsite review, including:

- Locations of review activities
- Sample composition and size
- Specific issues to target through interviews

Second, the Regional Office will use the information to prepare a preliminary assessment of the State's performance, as reported in the statewide assessment.

### **D.1. Making Decisions Regarding the Onsite Review**

The onsite review activities are conducted in at least three locations in the State. The State's largest metropolitan subdivision is designated in regulation as a required location for the onsite review. This means the metropolitan subdivision in the State, whether that is a county or a city, that has the largest population in the State.

The other two locations are to be determined by the Regional Office in collaboration with the State, and the selection will depend upon issues raised by the statewide assessment. The Regional Office will consider the following criteria in making this decision:

- It is not necessary to target the most troublesome geographic areas for the onsite review, although the locations selected must fairly represent practice in the State.

- If the statewide assessment identifies particular geographic areas, program areas, or populations of children and families served that need the more intense review provided onsite, locations may be selected that will permit that type of review.
- If there are no outstanding programmatic or systemic issues that will be the focus of onsite review activities, the criteria for selecting locations may be to identify the most typical practice in the State, including a mix of rural and urban sites, small and large sites, and so forth.

Because the circumstances in each State will vary, imposing additional requirements on site selection would impede the flexibility of the Regional Office and State to ensure that the onsite review is responsive to individual State issues and needs.

In using the statewide assessment to determine the composition of the sample of cases to be reviewed onsite, the State and the Regional Office determine whether there are program needs that warrant a weighting of the sample toward one program over another. In all State reviews, the sample must include both inhome cases and foster care cases, but the proportion of each case type need not always be equal. For example, if the statewide assessment raises significant safety concerns around children served in their own homes, but does not indicate problems in the foster care program, the sample might be structured to include a larger percentage of inhome cases than foster care cases. If there are not overriding concerns raised in the statewide assessment about one program over another, the sample should be divided evenly between inhome and foster care cases.

Finally, in using the statewide assessment to structure the onsite review, there may be issues raised around outcomes or systemic factors that warrant specific questions of stakeholders. Some examples encountered in the pilot reviews include State policies or practices around screening investigations of reports of child maltreatment that affect child safety, bifurcated systems of service delivery that affect the agency's responsiveness to the community, and contractual issues that affect service delivery. Where such issues exist and are within the scope of the Child and Family Services (CFS) reviews, the Regional Office may address this either by asking the State to schedule specific types of stakeholders for interviews or by advising the review team of specific issues that should be addressed during the interviews.

## **D.2. Preparing the Preliminary Assessment**

The Regional Office will prepare a preliminary assessment of the State's performance on each of the outcomes and systemic factors, based on information from the statewide assessment. The preliminary assessment should be completed by the Regional Office 30 days prior to the onsite review in order to provide adequate time to disseminate it to members of the review team.

The preliminary assessment is based entirely on information from the statewide assessment and is simply a matter of recording information pertaining to the outcomes and systemic factors from the statewide assessment onto the Summary of Findings Form.

Decisions about substantial conformity and the final report to the State will be based on information from both the statewide assessment and the onsite review. Recording information from the statewide assessment onto the Summary of Findings Form prior to the onsite review accomplishes the following objectives:

- It provides all members of the review team, who will receive a copy of the preliminary assessment, with basic information about the State and the statewide assessment as they begin the onsite review.
- It assists the team in combining information obtained onsite with the information in the statewide assessment for use in the exit conference.
- It permits a quick identification of areas where there may be discrepancies between information obtained onsite and information from the statewide assessment, so that the discrepancy resolution process can begin immediately following the onsite review.
- It identifies, before the onsite review, the State's performance level with regard to the statewide aggregate data and the national standards.
- It provides an opportunity to begin preparing the final report, since the Summary of Findings Form is a part of the final report. Given the importance of providing timely feedback to the State following the review, this is an especially important consideration.

Completing the preliminary assessment involves the following steps:

- The Regional Office records pertinent data and narrative information from the statewide assessment, describing each of the outcomes and systemic factors, on the Summary of Findings Form.
- The Regional Office compares the State's aggregate data used to make determinations about substantial conformity with the national standards and records that information on the form.
- The Regional Office works in collaboration with the State and the peer review contractor to see that all review team members receive a copy of the preliminary assessment prior to the onsite review (as part of the information package sent to review team members).

### **D.3. Example of Preliminary Assessment**

The example that follows is one page from the Summary of Findings Form (see appendix F) that illustrates how information from the statewide assessment is used to prepare the preliminary assessment. This information is updated and supplemented during and after the onsite review and serves as the final report to the State for the CFS review.

## Example of Preliminary Assessment

### II. PERMANENCY

<b>Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Team 1</b>	<b>Team 2</b>	<b>Team 3</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:					
Partially Achieved:					
Not Achieved or Addressed:					
Not Applicable:					
<b>Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:</b>					
	<b>National Standard</b>	<b>State's Percentage</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Standard</b>	
Foster care re-entries	13%	20%		X	
Length of time to achieve reunification	80%	87%	X		
Length of time to achieve adoption	26%	34%	X		
Stability of foster care placements	77%	73%		X	
Length of stay in foster care	12 months	9 months	N/A	N/A	

#### Item 5. Foster Care Re-entries

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement      \_\_\_\_ Both

##### Basis:

- Statewide aggregate data indicates that more children (20%) in foster care have had multiple entries within the previous 12 months than the national standard for this indicator (13%). Percentage of children re-entering foster care has increased over the past 3 years from 16% to 20%.
- According to the statewide assessment, the State has observed an increase in foster care re-entries as the length of stay in foster care has decreased. State indicates that most re-entries are by children discharged to reunification, as opposed to other discharge reasons. State is concerned about the availability of services to families following reunification.

#### Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement      \_\_\_\_ Both

##### Basis:

- Statewide aggregate data indicates fewer children in the State (73%) have no more than 2 placements in a 12-month period than the national standard (77%) for this indicator. The number of placement settings for children in foster care has not changed significantly over the past 3 years.
- Statewide assessment indicates the average number of placements per child in the first episode of foster care is 3. Most children go to shelter care first and then to another placement setting. Foster care disruptions are increasing.

For those outcomes and systemic factors reviewed for which there are no data, the Regional Office will record other relevant information from the statewide assessment in the preliminary assessment. For example, under “Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning” (item 18 on the Summary of Findings Form), the Regional Office will summarize information from section IV-C of the statewide assessment related to this item. Under each of the systemic factors, the Regional Office will record relevant information addressing each factor from sections II and IV of the statewide assessment.

Some of the performance indicators used in the review are only collected on site, and are not addressed in the statewide assessment, e.g., current risk of harm to the child, current relationship of child in care with parents. Those indicators are not addressed in the preliminary assessment.

## **E. Interim Statewide Assessments Between Full Reviews**

### **E.1. State Responsibilities**

States determined to be in substantial conformity are required to complete interim statewide assessments between full reviews. There is no similar requirement for States determined not to be in substantial conformity, since those States are reviewed at 2-year intervals.

The State must submit to the Regional Office a completed interim statewide assessment 3 years from the date of the previous onsite review, meaning that the work on the interim assessment must begin approximately 6 months prior to that time. The process for completing the interim statewide assessment is the same as completing it at the time of a full review, including the participation of representatives external to the State agency.

### **E.2. Regional Office Responsibilities**

The Regional Office initiates the statewide assessment process by transmitting the statewide assessment form and the data profiles to the State 6 months prior to the date the completed statewide assessment is due in the Regional Office. The Regional Office works with the Central Office of the ACF as needed to obtain the data profiles from NCANDS and AFCARS.

The Regional Office reviews the completed interim statewide assessment for indications of the State’s status in relation to the outcomes and systemic factors subject to review. It is not necessary for the Regional Office to approve the interim statewide assessment, but if it is incomplete, the Regional Office will ask the State to provide additional information. In particular, the Regional Office will review the interim statewide assessment to determine whether the State is maintaining the level of achievement on the statewide aggregate data required to comply with the national standard. If the State drops below the national standard for the statewide aggregate data, or the agreed upon

percentage of achievement for the State, the Regional Office will follow the procedures at 45 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 1355.32 (c) for reinstating reviews based on information that the State is not in substantial conformity. The Regional Office will first request that the State submit additional information. If the additional information submitted by the State continues to indicate nonconformity, the Regional Office, in consultation with the Children's Bureau, may initiate either a partial or a full review, as appropriate, to make the determination of substantial conformity.

# **Chapter 4**

## **Onsite Reviews**

### **A. Purpose**

The onsite review is the second stage of the review process. The onsite review includes the examination of a sample of cases for outcome achievement and interviews with community stakeholders to evaluate the systemic factors under review.

The onsite review of cases is designed primarily to gather qualitative information. The cases reviewed on site include child-specific performance indicators that correspond to certain statewide aggregate data, such as foster care re-entries and the recurrence of maltreatment. Other performance indicators reviewed on site cannot be reported in aggregate form through databases, such as the risk of harm to children and the nature of the relationship between children in care and their parents; therefore, the onsite review is the only source of information for those indicators. Through the combination of aggregate data reported on the statewide assessment and case-specific information gathered on site, the review team is able to evaluate outcome achievement within programs and to identify areas where technical assistance is needed to make improvements.

### **B. Onsite Review Activities**

The onsite review occurs over a period of 1 week. While the exact review schedule must be developed for each individual State, a sample agenda is provided in appendix G.

The State agency must schedule the following activities for the onsite review:

- An entrance conference for Federal officials to meet with State staff and review team members to review the structure and agenda of the week's activities and provide opportunities to raise and clarify issues pertinent to the review (Note: If an entrance conference is impractical logistically, it may be forgone altogether or conducted by video or audio conference call.)
- An orientation of the review team members at the start of the review, if not previously done, to the instruments used in the review and functions of the team (this should be done prior to the onsite review if at all possible)
- Appointments with State-level stakeholders for interviews with the reviewers
- A meeting of the entire review team at the end of the review week to conduct the final debriefing, compile the Summary of Findings Form for the State, and prepare for the exit conference

- An exit conference for Federal officials to meet with State staff and review team members to provide an overview of tentative findings of the review, discuss next steps, and raise and clarify issues related to the review or the preliminary findings

Each local review site coordinator must arrange the following activities for the onsite review:

- Informal entrance and exit conferences, where practical, with local officials and local team members at the local review sites within the State
- Schedules for each reviewer that include time for case record reviews; stakeholder interviews; and travel time and means of transportation, if needed, to interviews
- Appointments for reviewers to interview individuals in the cases being reviewed
- Appointments for the reviewers to interview stakeholders
- Daily team briefings at the local review sites

## **C. Advance Preparation for the Onsite Review**

Preparation for the onsite review will be carried out by the Central Office of the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), the Regional Offices, the State central and local agencies, and the contractor handling peer reviewers and certain logistical arrangements for the reviews. The responsibilities of each of those parties are listed below:

### **C.1. Regional Office ACF Responsibilities**

- Assign an overall review team leader and other Regional Office team members
- Provide Regional Office staff to serve on the review team, including leading or co-leading local teams
- Consult with State and Central Office staff about the review team composition, including representatives from other States or Regional Offices if they are to be included on the review team
- Notify the peer review contractor, 3 months prior to the onsite review, of the number of peer reviewers needed for the review and approve the list of peer reviewers selected for the review
- Provide the peer review contractor with information needed to send out to review team members before the onsite review week



- In collaboration with the State and Central Office, identify State-Specific systemic issues from the statewide assessment that need further review onsite, determine locations of the local review sites, and determine the sample size and composition
- In collaboration with the State, ensure that all required State and local stakeholders are scheduled for interviews during the onsite review
- Request a listing of cases that were open in the State for inhome services during the period under review, from which the sample of inhome cases will be drawn, and transmit the listing to the Children's Bureau for sample selection
- Return to the State the random sample listings from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and the list of inhome cases after the Children's Bureau has drawn the samples
- Plan for the orientation and training of review team members
- Develop the agenda for the entrance conference in collaboration with the State
- Determine which individuals on each local review team will provide quality assurance functions to ensure consistency in ratings, correct application of criteria to performance indicators and outcomes, and accuracy in making review-related decisions

## **C.2. Central Office ACF Responsibilities**

- Identify Central Office review team members and make arrangements for all team members to arrive and be present for the entire review period
- Arrange for the transportation and lodging of Central Office team members
- Provide Central Office reviewers with training and preparation to participate as reviewers or local team leaders, including Regional Office staff by teleconference or otherwise where possible
- Assign Central Office staff members to serve as local team leaders on the review, as needed
- Review the statewide assessment and the preliminary assessment in order to become familiar with the State's performance before the onsite review
- Consult with the State and Regional Office on sample size and composition, locations of review sites, and issues needing particular attention in the review

- Identify a random sample of cases to be reviewed onsite from AFCARS data (foster care cases) and the listing of inhome service cases provided by the State, and transmit the sample listing through the Regional Office to the State
- Assist, as needed, with conducting prereview orientation or training for team members

### **C.3. Peer Review Contractor Responsibilities**

- Identify peer reviewers for the review and ensure that they are trained and prepared to participate in the review
- Provide the Regional Office with the names of peer reviewers 2 months prior to the onsite review
- Obtain Regional Office approval of the peer reviewers selected for the review
- Make logistical arrangements for the peer reviewers, e.g., transportation and lodging (Note: The contractor should coordinate these arrangements with Federal and State staff to ensure that peer reviewers are housed in the same locations as Federal and State members of the review team.)
- Transmit advance packages of information to all review team members, including logistical information and other materials to prepare them for the review (A checklist of information that should be sent to review team members is included in appendix H.)
- Make arrangements for copies of the review instruments and any other information needed by team members during the review week to be available in the State at the beginning of the review

### **C.4. State Agency Responsibilities (Central Office)**

- Assign a State coordinator for the review to act as liaison with the Regional Office and the contractor in making arrangements for the review
- Identify State members of the review team and provide that information to the Regional Office
- Assign local agency review coordinators in each of the local sites selected for the review: they may or may not be members of the review team; they are responsible for setting up interviews, making local arrangements, and ensuring that case records to be reviewed are available

- Identify local review sites, including the State’s largest metropolitan subdivision, in consultation with the Regional Office and on the basis of information from the statewide assessment
- Ensure that all local agency review coordinators have a copy of the procedures manual and are well oriented to the review process
- Prepare, and submit to the Regional Office 45–60 days prior to the onsite review, or as soon as the composition of the onsite sample has been determined, a listing of cases that were open for inhome services for any portion of the year under review, from which the sample of inhome service cases will be drawn
- Transmit the total sample listings of 150 foster care cases and 150 inhome cases to local agency coordinators 30 days prior to the beginning of the onsite review; local agencies must have sufficient time to review the total sample listings, identify the 30–50 cases to be included using the criteria provided in this manual, contact the persons involved in the cases, and schedule interviews
- Schedule State stakeholder interviews
- Consult with Regional Office staff and local agency coordinators on logistical arrangements for the review, including:
  - Identification of lodging arrangements for onsite review team members
  - Identification of locations for entrance and exit conferences
  - Identification of space needed for other scheduled meetings and review activities during the week

#### **C.5. Local Agency Coordinators’ Responsibilities**

- Select the cases to be reviewed from the random sample pulled for the review, on the basis of criteria discussed below under “Case Selection and Review”
- Orient local staff to the purposes and activities of the review
- Ensure that workers assigned to the families selected for review are scheduled for interviews on their case(s)
- Schedule and confirm interviews with each person involved in a case who is to be interviewed and orient those persons to the purposed of the review (see appendix E)

- Schedule and confirm local stakeholder interviews and orient those persons to the purposes of the review
- Schedule and confirm any planned focus groups or other meetings that will be a part of the local review activities
- Prepare an agenda for each review team member that includes time to review cases assigned to that individual; the name, time and date of each scheduled interview and/or meeting; and time for the local entrance and exit conferences
- Prepare maps or other written directions for each reviewer to get to the scheduled appointments
- Reserve space for record review, interviews, and other planned meetings
- Assemble all case records to be reviewed so that they will be accessible and ready for review at the onset of the review
- Secure any releases of information or confidentiality forms needed to permit reviewers who are neither State nor Federal staff to access case records and interview the individuals associated with a case

## **D. Case Selection and Review**

### **D.1. Sample of Cases Reviewed**

The Regional Office collaborates with the State to determine the number and composition of the sample of case records to be pulled for the onsite review, on the basis of information in the statewide assessment. The sample of cases reviewed will include children in foster care and children receiving services in their own homes.

The sample of foster care cases reviewed on site is selected randomly from the AFCARS data submitted by the State, after the locations and composition of the sample have been determined. The sample of inhome cases is selected randomly from a listing of inhome service cases that were open to services for at least 60 days during the period under review, including cases that were subsequently closed. The State must provide that listing of cases, since the information is not currently available through the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) or other national data sources, and should submit it to the Regional Office 45–60 days prior to the onsite review. The listing of cases must include information that will permit selection of the sample by location in the State, since cases will only be drawn for those locations selected for the onsite review. The Regional Office will provide the list of inhome cases to statisticians in the Children’s Bureau, who will select a random sample of 150 cases from the listing of inhome cases and 150 cases from the AFCARS data for those locations in the State where

the onsite review activities will be conducted. The Children's Bureau will send the sample listings back to the Regional Office, which will then transmit them to the State.

The sample is selected from the universe of cases in the program area under review. The universe includes all children reported on the AFCARS and all families whose cases were open for services during the period under review in the locations selected for the onsite review. Cases of children in foster care will be pulled by child rather than by family, and cases involving inhome services will be pulled by family. Cases selected for the sample must have been open for services for at least 60 days during the period under review, although they may be closed at the time of the review. The Regional Office will advise the State of the specific timeframe covered by the review, which will most likely correspond to the Federal fiscal year of the AFCARS data used for the permanency profiles.

The total sample pulled will consist of 150 foster care cases and 150 inhome cases from the population of cases in the three locations to be reviewed on site. From these listings, a smaller subsample totaling 30 to 50 cases will be selected for review on site across the three locations. For example, approximately 10–20 cases will be reviewed in each of the three locations. The total of 30–50 cases reviewed across the three locations will include both foster care and inhome cases. The proportion of cases pulled from the foster care and inhome case listings will reflect the composition of the sample as decided jointly by the Regional Office and the State, on the basis of information in the statewide assessment. However, both inhome and foster care cases must be included in the sample of cases reviewed onsite. If necessary, to ensure that both types of cases are adequately represented in the sample, the size of the sample of cases reviewed may be increased.

Interviews may not be possible in all the cases in the sample. Therefore, local agency coordinators in the sites being reviewed will select the cases for the review from the random listings of 150 cases, using the criteria below:

- The local review coordinators must begin with the random list of case records and select, in order, the first cases on the list for their locations that meet the criteria listed in the bullets below, bearing in mind that all key individuals may not be available for interviews in each case selected.
- The local review coordinators will determine whether the individuals in the case who must be interviewed are willing to be interviewed and available and can be reached during the review week. The case may be rejected and the next case on the list considered only under the following circumstances:
  - If enough of the individuals to be interviewed in the case are either unavailable or completely unwilling to be interviewed that sufficient information cannot be obtained to complete the review instrument

- If the case was pulled in error and had not been open for service at any point during the review period, or, for inhome cases, open at least 60 days during the review period
- All cases selected for the sample must have some interviews with the relevant parties in the case. Otherwise, the instrument cannot be completed accurately.
- The case must have been open for a long enough period of time, i.e., 60 days, during the year under review to have sufficient information to review the case. The listing of cases from which the sample is pulled should only include those cases open for at least 60 days during the period under review. If cases open less than 60 days appear on the list of 150 cases, they should not be considered for the sample of 30–50 cases that will be reviewed.
- Local review coordinators must record the reasons for eliminating any cases from the sample of cases to be reviewed on site and make that information available to the Regional Office review team leader.

The cases in the sample of 150 cases that are not selected for review will be used:

- To substitute for cases in the sample of 30–50 that cannot be reviewed for the reasons listed above
- To provide a pool of additional cases to be reviewed, if needed, to resolve discrepancies between information in the statewide assessment and the findings of the onsite review

## **D.2. Location of Case Records**

All case records being reviewed will be assembled in the local review sites so the reviewers will have access to the caseworkers assigned to the cases.

## **D.3. Preparation of the Records for Review**

Case records must be as orderly and up-to-date as possible, including any files maintained separately, e.g., separate child protective service files or separate family and child records. If the agency uses electronic files instead of paper files, it will be necessary for the local review coordinator to either make computers and technical support available to the reviewers for viewing the electronic records or obtain hard copies of the files or the portions of the files containing information relevant to the review. The caseworkers assigned to each case must be available for interviews with the reviewers. If electronic files are used, staff of the local agency must also be available to assist reviewers in obtaining additional information from the files that might be needed in addition to the hard copy files. If necessary, the State agency will obtain confidentiality statements or releases of information required by the State agency prior to the onsite review, in order to permit reviewers to read case records and interview the relevant

individuals in a case. The peer reviewer contractor will obtain signed confidentiality statements from peer reviewers participating in the review.

#### **D.4. Case Interviews**

The review team member(s) assigned a particular case is responsible for interviewing the individuals involved in the case, as well as reviewing the case record.

The following persons must be interviewed in a case unless they are unavailable or completely unwilling to be interviewed:

- The child (if old enough)
- The child's parent(s)
- The child's foster parent(s) if the child is in foster care
- The family's caseworker with the agency
- Any major service providers involved with the child or family; where there are numerous service providers involved with a family, it may only be necessary to schedule interviews with those most recently involved, those most knowledgeable of the family, or those representing the primary services the family is receiving

As needed on a case-by-case basis, other individuals who have relevant information on the case may also be interviewed, such as the child's guardian ad litem, advocate, or other family members.

Only school-age children will be interviewed unless other arrangements are made with the State. Cases involving preschool-age children may be selected for the sample with no child interview scheduled. For example, a preschool-age child included in the review may be observed by the reviewer in the foster home while interviewing the foster parent(s).

If possible, interviews should be conducted where the persons to be interviewed are located, i.e., in the foster home or in the family's home. Where travel arrangements and the availability of reviewers do not permit the time needed to travel to those locations, or when persons to be interviewed prefer not to have the reviewer in their homes or offices, the local coordinators may arrange the interviews in a central location. Also, telephone interviews may be arranged for individuals who are located outside of the local review site.

The interviews with the individuals in a case should follow the time designated on the reviewer's schedule for reviewing the case record. Without first becoming familiar with the circumstances of the case through a review of the record, the reviewer will be unable to explore pertinent issues with the person being interviewed.

Local site coordinators will schedule the interviews not to exceed 1 hour per interview and allow for time between interviews for any necessary travel to the appointments. Maps or other written directions to the interview sites should be prepared in advance and provided to the reviewer. Unless there are specific concerns about a reviewer interviewing someone alone, the caseworker will not need to accompany the reviewer on the interviews. If there are concerns about safety or other issues related to the interview, the local coordinator will advise the reviewer and assist in taking whatever precautions are needed, e.g., scheduling two reviewers for a particular interview or arranging the interview in the office.

Persons to be interviewed must be prepared for the interview by the local coordinator or designee by helping them to understand the purpose of the review. They should be assured that their participation is voluntary, but that their participation is critical to the success of the review. Also, when the interviews have been scheduled, the appointments should be confirmed in writing. (See Preparation for Interviews and Sample Confirmation Letters in appendix E.)

## **E. State and Local Stakeholder Interviews**

The onsite review includes interviews with community or State representatives, i.e., stakeholders, who are knowledgeable about the functioning of the agency in the State and community. The purpose of these interviews is to obtain information about the systemic factors under review and about how the systemic factors affect the outcomes for children and families in general, not on a case-specific basis. Information from the stakeholder interviews is used in combination with information from the statewide assessment to determine the State's conformity with State plan and program requirements for each of the systemic factors.

The review team will interview a complete set of stakeholders in each local review site for the local perspective. In addition, the team will interview stakeholders at the State level who can provide a broader, statewide perspective.

Stakeholder interviews are not to be confused with the interviews conducted on individual cases. Stakeholder interviews are not designed to elicit information on specific cases.

The perspectives and knowledge of individual stakeholders will vary and will determine which systemic issues they can and cannot address. It is unlikely that any single stakeholder will be able to cover each of the systemic factors with equal knowledge. Therefore, in each local review site, and at the State level, the review team must ensure that the combined information obtained from all the stakeholder interviews adequately addresses the three outcome areas and the seven systemic factors.

A Stakeholder Interview Guide is provided (see appendix D) to guide reviewers in interviewing stakeholders. The Regional Office team leader will complete the State-



Specific Issues section of the Stakeholder Interview Guide prior to the onsite review so that reviewers will cover the same issues in the three review locations.

State or local agency coordinators may prefer to set up group meetings or focus groups with some stakeholders in place of individual interviews. If so, the meetings should generally be limited to 8–10 individuals whose interests and involvement in child and family services are similar, for example, groups of foster parents, or law enforcement or education representatives.

If possible, State and local stakeholder interviews should be scheduled during regular work hours since the review teams often meet in the evenings for team briefings. However, it may be impossible to arrange for all interviews to occur during regular work hours, and some may have to be scheduled in the evenings.

### **E.1. Local Stakeholder Interviews**

In each local review site, prior to the onsite review, the local review coordinator will schedule a maximum of seven to ten stakeholder interviews. The interviews may be scheduled during the other review activities, depending upon the availability of individuals for interview. Stakeholder interviews should be scheduled for 1 hour each, and the schedule should allow for any necessary travel between appointments. Stakeholder interviews may be conducted either at the local agency or where the stakeholders are located. As in the case-specific interviews, the stakeholders to be interviewed should be prepared for the interviews, and the appointments confirmed in writing.

The following stakeholders must be scheduled for interviews in each local site:

- Local child welfare agency administrator
- Foster parents (preferably a small group meeting)
- Juvenile court judge (or the judge's designated court representative)
- Caseworker(s) from the local agency (preferably a small group meeting)
- Guardian ad litem/legal representatives (individually or in a group)
- Agency attorney(s) (individually or in a group)
- Local representatives of administrative review bodies, e.g., foster care review boards, if they exist

Additional representative stakeholders may be selected from the representatives with whom the State consulted in the development of its State Plan, such as:

- Tribal representatives
- Law enforcement representatives
- Youth services representatives
- Major initiative/project representatives
- Major service providers
- Mental health representatives
- Education representatives, including special education or early intervention coordinators
- Local child and family advocates

## **E.2. State Stakeholder Interviews**

In each State, interviews will also be scheduled with stakeholders who can address issues of concern to the State as a whole, as opposed to local issues. One or two reviewers of the review team will take responsibility for conducting the State interviews. If the location of the stakeholders relative to the review team presents a logistical problem, reviewers may conduct interviews by phone. Prior to the onsite review, the State coordinator for the review will schedule these interviews in collaboration with Federal staff. No more than five to 10 State stakeholder interviews should be scheduled.

The following State stakeholders must be scheduled for interviews:

- State child welfare director
- State child welfare program specialists (foster care, protective service, adoption, etc.)
- State court system representative(s)
- Major tribal representatives
- State representative(s) of administrative review bodies, e.g., foster care review boards

Additional State stakeholder may be selected from the representatives with whom the State consulted in developing its State Plan, such as:

- State education system
- State youth services agency
- State health department
- State Medicaid program
- State mental health agency
- State child welfare advocates
- University social work education program
- Major initiative/project representatives
- State foster parent association

## **F. Team Briefings**

The local teams will meet daily during the onsite review to review the day's activities. One of the primary purposes of the briefings is for each local review team to complete, over the course of the review week, a Summary of Findings Form based on their case reviews and local stakeholder interviews.

The briefings are the designated forum for individual reviewers to discuss their cases and their rationale for assigning particular ratings. While individual reviewers assign ratings to the cases they review, the briefings provide an opportunity for the team leader and other reviewers to help ensure that all reviewers use consistent rating criteria and are able to substantiate their ratings with adequate information. The briefings must provide opportunities for case discussion within a structured agenda in order to ensure that all cases are adequately briefed and considered by the team.

The briefings should occur following the onsite review activities for the day, and should include the following activities:

- Team members who have completed case reviews that day give a brief summary of the case to the local team and provide their ratings for each of the outcomes.
- The local team leader records the ratings on the Summary of Findings Form.

- Team members who have interviewed stakeholders give a brief summary of the interviews, addressing the systemic issues covered in the interviews.
- Team members raise problems or concerns about the schedules, logistical arrangements, instruments, or other areas before the team.
- The team leader determines whether all review activities are proceeding according to schedule and whether adjustments are needed.

During the daily briefings, the team leader uses the Summary of Findings Form to record the number of cases reviewed by the team, according to the degree of outcome achievement (substantially achieved, partially achieved, not achieved, or not applicable) for each of the safety, permanency, and well-being outcomes. Team members also discuss, and the team leader records on the form, the performance indicators that substantiate the ratings on the outcomes.

The local teams also summarize the information obtained from the local stakeholder interviews as it relates to the systemic factors and the outcomes. The team leader records this information in the section of the Summary of Findings Form dealing with systemic factors. By the end of the review week, all of the cases reviewed and information from all of the stakeholder interviews should be recorded on the form.

At the end of the onsite review, when the three local teams come together for the final briefing, the Regional Office review team leader will use the Summary of Findings Form as a guide for the final briefing, addressing each item with the entire review team. The information gathered by the three teams during the onsite review is consolidated with the preliminary assessment, which was prepared before the onsite review, for purposes of the exit conference. The Regional Office review team leader should be able to give the State a preliminary report on the outcomes and systemic factors. This verbal report provided at the exit conference should be presented as the team's tentative findings, since a complete analysis and compilation of the information will not be possible until after the onsite review. A determination of substantial conformity cannot be provided at the exit conference, and will be included in the written final report to the State following the onsite review.

## **G. Instruments**

Standardized instruments and instructions are provided by the ACF for all phases of the review (see appendices B, C, D, and F). Orientation to the instruments used during the onsite review will be provided to review team members prior to or at the onset of the review. The following instruments are needed to complete the review:

- Statewide assessment
- Onsite Review Instrument

- Stakeholder Interview Guide
- Summary of Findings Form

Copies of the instruments and instructions will be provided for the review by the Regional Office through the peer review contractor. Also, copies of the instruments will be available through the Children's Bureau Web site on the Internet's World Wide Web at <[www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb)>.



# **Chapter 5**

## **Final Report**

### **A. Purpose of Final Report**

The final report is a compilation of the agency's strengths and needs for each of the outcomes and systemic factors reviewed. The primary purpose of the final report is to document for the State the determination of substantial conformity or nonconformity in each area reviewed. The State will use the information in the final report to develop a program improvement plan (PIP) for any area determined not to be in substantial conformity.

### **B. Format of the Final Report**

The format for the final report is the Summary of Findings Form, which is used throughout the review process, supplemented by additional information described below. The preparation of the form begins with a preliminary assessment prior to the onsite review (described in chapter 3), and is then completed during the onsite review and immediately thereafter. The final version of the Summary of Findings Form serves as the final report of the review to the State.

### **C. Preparation of the Final Report**

Information is gathered for the final report at three points in the process:

- The preliminary assessment of the outcomes and systemic factors under review is completed by the Regional Office when the State submits the statewide assessment.
- The preliminary assessment is updated and supplemented by the team leaders during the onsite review with information gathered on site from case reviews and stakeholder interviews.
- The final compilation of the information from the onsite review and the statewide assessment is prepared by the Regional Office immediately following the onsite review.

Following the onsite review, the Regional Office completes the Summary of Findings Form and makes a determination about substantial conformity. Since the preliminary assessment includes information on the performance indicators from the statewide

assessment, completing the final report consists of adding information from the onsite review, i.e., case reviews and stakeholder interviews.

## **D. Content of the Final Report**

The information recorded under each item in the Summary of Findings Form must be specific to the item, clearly stated, and relevant to the applicable State plan requirements for the item. If possible, each item should be addressed by including information obtained from all three sources of information used in the reviews: the statewide assessment, the case reviews, and the stakeholder interviews. This will ensure that all of the necessary information will be used in making determinations about substantial conformity. Each item must be addressed using only that information obtained during the review process. The confidentiality of individual children, families, and representative stakeholders is protected in the report by not citing names of persons or organizations from which information was obtained.

The completed final report to the State will include:

- **Cover Letter.** The cover letter includes a statement about substantial conformity; the amount of the penalty, if applicable; and the date by which a PIP must be submitted to the Regional Office, if applicable.
- **Executive Summary.** This section is a summary of the major strengths and needs noted in each outcome and systemic area and the status of substantial conformity.
- **Introduction.** This section provides an overview of the background and purposes of the review; the outcome areas reviewed; and dates and descriptions of the review activities, such as time periods involved, methods of completing the statewide assessment, review locations, review team representatives, and number and type of cases reviewed. (See appendix K for sample introductory language.)
- **Summary of Findings Form.** This form is completed and noted above, along with the final sections of the form that address the areas of substantial conformity.

### **D.1. Example of Final Report**

The example on the following page is one page from the Summary of Findings Form, illustrating how the preliminary assessment example in chapter 3 is updated with information from the onsite review for the final report.



## Example of Final Report

### II. PERMANENCY

<b>Outcome P1: Children will have permanency and stability in their living situations.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Team 1</b>	<b>Team 2</b>	<b>Team 3</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:	7	7	12	26	81%
Partially Achieved:	3	1	1	5	16%
Not Achieved or Addressed:	0	1	0	1	3%
Not Applicable:	6	6	6	18	
<b>Conformity of statewide data indicators with national standards:</b>					
	<b>National Standard</b>	<b>State's Percentage</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Standard</b>	
Foster care re-entries	13%	20%		X	
Length of time to achieve reunification	80%	87%	X		
Length of time to achieve adoption	26%	34%	X		
Stability of foster care placements	77%	73%		X	
Length of stay in foster care	12 months	9 months	N/A	N/A	

#### Item 5. Foster care re-entries

\_\_\_\_ Strength      X   Area Needing Improvement    \_\_\_\_ Both

##### Basis:

- Statewide aggregate data indicates that more children (20%) in foster care have had multiple entries within the previous 12 months than the national standard for this indicator (13%). Percentage of children re-entering foster care has increased over the past 3 years from 16% to 20%.
- According to the statewide assessment, the State has observed an increase in foster care re-entries as the length of stay in foster care has decreased. State indicates that most re-entries are by children discharged to reunification, as opposed to other discharge reasons. State is concerned about the availability of services to families following reunification.
- Of 32 foster care cases reviewed onsite, ten had been discharged from foster care and re-entered within the past year. All ten had re-entered due to the same general reasons as the original entry. There was little evidence of post-reunification services to families, and no safety plans were developed for children being reunified.
- Service providers interviewed in all 3 review sites indicated they receive few requests for post-reunification services. When requested, they typically provide individual or family counseling and parenting classes. There was no evidence of more specialized services to support reunification.

#### Item 6. Stability of foster care placement

\_\_\_\_ Strength      X   Area Needing Improvement    \_\_\_\_ Both

##### Basis:

- Statewide aggregate data indicates fewer children in the State (73%) have no more than 2 placements in a 12-month period than the national standard (77%) for this indicator. The number of placement settings for children in foster care has not changed significantly over the past 3 years.
- Statewide assessment indicates the average number of placements per child in the first episode of foster care is 3. Most children go to shelter care first and then to another placement setting. Foster care disruptions are increasing.
- Of the 32 children in foster care reviewed, 18 of the children had been in two placement settings, 9 had been in three settings, and five had been in four or more settings. Most of the children were initially placed in shelter care and later moved. Except for moving children from shelter, all but five of the other moves were unplanned disruptions.
- Foster families interviewed indicated a need for more support services, such as respite care and behavior management. They indicated that while caseworkers provide assistance when requested, they generally have infrequent contacts with their workers unless there is a problem.

## **E. Distribution of the Final Report**

The Regional Office will provide copies of the final report to the State agency executive officer, the State review coordinator, the Central Office and Federal review team members, and the peer review contractor within 30 days of completing the onsite review. In accordance with Federal requirements that the reports be made available to the public, States will distribute copies of the report to State members of the review team and make the results of the review available to the public. The Children's Bureau will also publish information pertaining to the reviews on its Web site or through other means, as appropriate.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Substantial Conformity**

Determinations of substantial conformity are made separately for each of the seven outcomes and the seven systemic factors under review. A State may be determined to be in substantial conformity on one or more of the outcomes or systemic factors and not in substantial conformity on the others. Program improvement plans and penalties cover only those areas determined not to be in substantial conformity.

Appendix I contains a chart that displays the criteria for determining substantial conformity with the outcomes and the systemic factors. The chart also lists each of the performance indicators, including the statewide aggregate data, used to determine substantial conformity. There are separate methods for determining substantial conformity on the outcomes and the systemic factors, as described below.

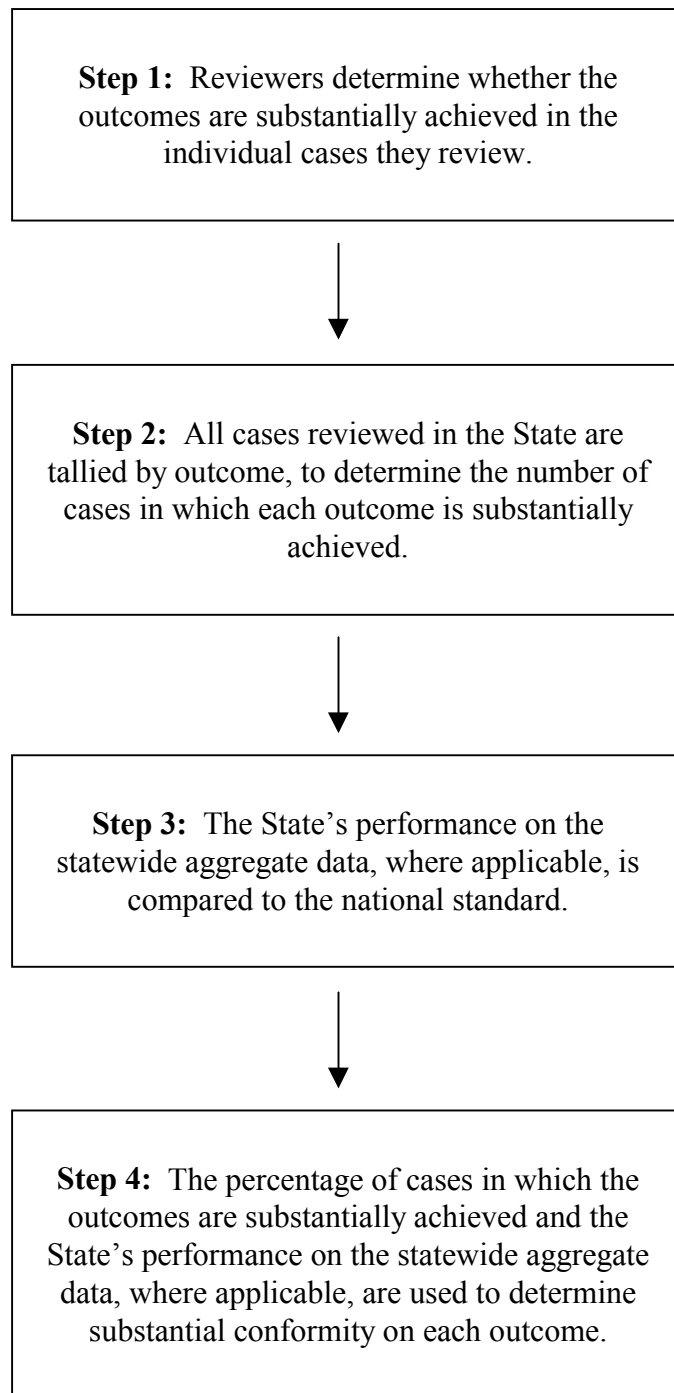
#### **A. Substantial Conformity on the Outcomes**

Two sets of information are used to determine the State's substantial conformity on each of the seven outcomes: the percentage of cases reviewed in which the outcome was determined to be substantially achieved and the State's performance on the statewide aggregate data for which national standards have been established.

First, reviewers must determine whether the outcomes in each individual case they review are substantially achieved. Those decisions are based on the performance indicators listed in the Onsite Review Instrument, which is completed for each case.

Second, the review team must make determinations regarding substantial conformity for the State as a whole. Those decisions are based on the percentage of cases reviewed in which the outcomes are substantially achieved, and statewide aggregate data for selected outcomes. Currently, in only two of the seven outcomes (Safety Outcome #1 and Permanency Outcome #1), decisions about the State's substantial conformity are made on the basis of statewide aggregate data in addition to the findings of the onsite review. For the remaining five outcomes, the performance indicators reviewed on site provide the basis for determining the State's substantial conformity. In the future, other statewide data indicators may be included in determinations of substantial conformity.

The diagram below illustrates the process of determining substantial conformity on the outcomes.



### **A.1 Rating Outcomes of an Individual Case**

When a reviewer has gathered all of the information on a specific case through review of the case record and interviews with parties in the case, (s)he must make a decision as to whether each applicable outcome in the case has been substantially achieved, partially achieved, or not achieved.

The performance indicators used to make determinations as to whether each outcome has been substantially achieved are listed in the Onsite Review Instrument (see appendix C). The reviewer uses the following criteria to determine whether or not the outcomes have been substantially achieved in each individual case:

- Safety Outcome #1: Both onsite indicators must be rated a “strength.”
- Safety Outcome #2: All three indicators must be rated a “strength.”
- Permanency Outcome #1: Not more than one of the six onsite indicators may be rated an “area needing improvement.”
- Permanency Outcome #2: Not more than one of the six onsite indicators may be rated an “area needing improvement.”
- Well-Being Outcome #1: Not more than one of the five onsite indicators may be rated an “area needing improvement.”
- Well-Being Outcome #2: The one onsite indicator must be rated a “strength.”
- Well-Being Outcome #3: Both onsite indicators must be rated a “strength.”

The reviewer will determine an outcome in an individual case to be partially achieved if some of the performance indicators for that outcome have been rated as “strengths,” but fewer than the number noted in the paragraph above. If none of the performance indicators are rated as “strengths” for a particular outcome, the reviewer will determine that the outcome is not achieved.

## **A.2. Establishing a National Standard on Statewide Aggregate Data**

A national standard will be established for each of the statewide aggregate data indicators used to determine substantial conformity in the reviews. For the foster care indicators that are based on the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System

(AFCARS) data, the national standard will be established according to the following procedure:

- Each State and the District of Columbia submits data through AFCARS for selected time periods. (Note: The foster care standards will initially be set using 1998a and 1998b AFCARS submissions.)
- All of the data submissions for the time periods are pooled. Assuming that each of the States and the District of Columbia submitted complete data for each of two periods, there will be 102 data elements in the pool.
- All of the data submissions are then rank-ordered on a scale from highest to lowest.
- The point on the scale that represents the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile is the national standard for that statewide aggregate data indicator.

The same process is used to establish the national standards on the two statewide aggregate data indicators derived from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) data, except that two NCANDS reporting periods are used to establish the standard. (Note: The safety standards will initially be set using 1997 and 1998 NCANDS data.)

When a State begins a child and family services review, its data for the period under review are compared with the national standards to determine the State's substantial conformity. States whose data fall below the national standard in a review will be required to implement a program improvement plan (PIP) designed to improve the States' performance on the data indicators in order to achieve substantial conformity. However, the State and the Regional Office may negotiate a percentage of improvement to be made in the statewide data indicators over the course of a PIP that is less than the national standard. In those circumstances, if the State achieves the level of improvement agreed upon in the PIP, the State will not be penalized for nonconformity on the basis of the statewide aggregate data indicator. The criteria for determining the amount of improvement that must be made through a PIP are discussed in chapter 7, Program Improvement Plans.

With a goal of continuous quality improvement, States whose data remain below the national standard in subsequent reviews will be required to establish new benchmarks of improvement to be made toward the eventual attainment of the national standard. As long as the State reaches the agreed-upon level of improvement, failure to reach the national standard will not be the basis for withholding Federal funds with respect to the outcome in question.

### **A.3. Determining Substantial Conformity for the State**

In order for the State to be determined to be in substantial conformity on any given outcome, the outcome must be determined to be substantially achieved in 95 percent of the cases reviewed (90 percent in the first review). In addition, the State must meet the national standard that has been established for any statewide aggregate data attached to that particular outcome.

The example on the following page illustrates how the cases reviewed on site are tallied by outcome to determine, in part, if the State is in substantial conformity.

Currently, national standards will be established for statewide aggregate data on two of the outcomes, Safety Outcome #1 and Permanency Outcome #1. Those statewide aggregate data include the following:

#### **Safety Outcome #1:**

- Recurrence of maltreatment (Of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during the first 6 months of the reporting period, XX percent had another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period.)
- Incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care (Of all children in foster care in the State during the period under review, XX percent were the subject of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff.)

#### **Permanency Outcome #1:**

- Foster care re-entries (Of all children who entered care during the year under review, XX percent re-entered foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode.)
- Stability of foster care placement (Of all children who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal, XX percent had no more than two placement settings.)
- Length of time to achieve adoption goal (Of all children who exited foster care during the year under review to a finalized adoption, XX percent exited care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home.)
- Length of time to achieve reunification (Of all children who were reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care, XX percent were reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home.)

**Example of Calculating Substantial Achievement of Outcomes in  
Cases Reviewed On Site**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Number of Cases Substantially Achieved</b>	<b>Number of Cases Partially Achieved</b>	<b>Number of Cases Not Achieved</b>	<b>Percentage of Cases Substantially Achieved (N=30)</b>
Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.	25	5	0	83%
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate.	29	0	1	96%
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.	30	0	0	100%
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.	15	5	10	50%
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.	29	1	0	96%
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.	20	5	5	66%
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.	30	0	0	100%



Although it will not be used initially to determine substantial conformity, we expect a national standard to be established for the statewide aggregate data indicator, “length of stay in foster care.” This indicator is defined as follows: the median length of time to discharge for children in the first-time cohort entry group in foster care for the year under review. Currently, the indicator is included in the data profiles so that States and the Federal government can evaluate this important indicator and its relationship to outcomes for children in foster care. Using it to determine substantial conformity, however, requires that each State’s cohort group for the period under review achieve the median discharge rate prior to the initiation of the statewide assessment. Preliminary review of States’ data indicates that, for some States, there will be insufficient time from the time the cohort group of children entered foster care to the initiation of the review for 50 percent of those children to exit care and thus achieve the median length of stay. Therefore, we are providing the indicator for contextual purposes only at this point.

For the remaining five outcomes, the determination of substantial conformity is based on whether the outcomes have been determined to be substantially achieved in 95 percent (90 percent in the initial reviews) of the cases reviewed on site.

If these findings on the case reviews were consistent with the statewide aggregate data indicators from AFCARS and NCANDS, and information in the statewide assessment, the State would not be in substantial conformity on the following outcomes: Safety Outcome #1, Permanency Outcome #2, and Well-Being Outcome #2.

#### **A.4. Example of Determining Substantial Conformity on the Outcomes**

The example below illustrates the process of determining substantial conformity on Permanency Outcome #1, “children have permanency and stability in their living situations.”

In this example the outcome “children have permanency and stability in their living situations” includes seven performance indicators and statewide aggregate data indicators that are used to determine compliance:

1. Foster care re-entries (both onsite and statewide data)
2. Stability of foster care placement (both onsite and statewide data indicators)
3. Permanency goal for the child (onsite data only)
4. Independent living services (onsite data only)
5. Length of time to achieve adoption goal (both onsite and statewide data)
6. Length of time to achieve reunification (statewide data only)
7. Permanency goal of other planned living arrangement (onsite data only)

The onsite performance indicators in the Onsite Review Instrument are rated on information obtained from the cases reviewed. The statewide aggregate data indicators are obtained from the AFCARS data profiles included in the statewide assessment. In order for the State to be determined to be in compliance with this outcome, it must meet the national standard on each of the statewide aggregate data indicators listed above and the outcome must be rated as substantially achieved in 95 percent of the cases reviewed.

In this example, assume that we determine from the statewide assessment that the State meets the national standard for compliance with three of the four statewide aggregate data indicators attached to this outcome (length of time to achieve adoption goal, length of time to achieve reunification, and foster care re-entries), but does not meet the national standard on one statewide aggregate data indicator (stability of foster care placement). In the onsite case reviews, assume that we determine that 95 percent of the cases reviewed included ratings of substantially achieved for Permanency Outcome #1.

Because the State did not meet the national standard on all four of the statewide aggregate data indicators, it is not in compliance with this outcome. The State must enter into a PIP to improve its performance on “stability of foster care” in order to be determined to be in compliance.

## **B. Substantial Conformity on the Systemic Factors**

Individual determinations of substantial conformity are made on each of the systemic factors, on the basis of the State plan or other program requirements for each factor reviewed. Information pertaining to the systemic factors is gathered and evaluated in the statewide assessment and the stakeholder interviews. Using this information, the review team makes the following determinations regarding each systemic factor:

- Whether or not the State plan requirements and other program requirements attached to the systemic factor are actually in place in the State
- Whether or not the State plan requirements and other requirements attached to the systemic factor are functioning as described in the applicable regulation or statute

At the beginning of the onsite review, the review team will have the information on systemic factors that the State has included in the statewide assessment. During the onsite review, information from the local stakeholder interviews and the State stakeholder interviews will be gathered and used to evaluate the systemic factors. As with the outcomes, local review teams do not make determinations about substantial conformity on the systemic factors since the factors are Statewide issues. A determination about substantial conformity on the systemic factors cannot be considered until all three teams come together with their information at the end of the review. The final determination of substantial conformity is made in the written report to the State following the onsite review.

Each of the seven systemic factors reviewed is rated on the basis of multiple State plan or other program requirements, with the exception of “information system capacity,” which is rated on only one State plan requirement. Information obtained from both the statewide assessment and the stakeholder interviews must indicate that the State plan and other program requirements reviewed for each systemic factor are in place and functioning as required in order to make a determination of substantial conformity for the systemic factor.

The scale below describes how the State plan and program requirements are used to determine substantial conformity on the systemic factors. In order for a specific systemic factor to be determined to be in substantial conformity, the review team must assign it a rating of three or four, based on the criteria in the scale below.

<b>Not in Substantial Conformity</b>		<b>Substantial Conformity</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
None of the State plan or program requirements is in place.	Some or all of the State plan or program requirements are in place, but more than one of the requirements fails to function at the level described in each requirement.*	All of the State plan or program requirements are in place, and no more than one of the requirements fails to function as described in each requirement.*	All of the State plan or program requirements are in place and functioning as described in each requirement.

\*For the systemic factor “information system capacity,” if it is determined that a system is in place but not functioning at the level described in the one State plan requirement reviewed, that factor is rated “2,” rather than “3.”

### **B.1. Example of Determining Substantial Conformity on the Systemic Factors**

Using the systemic factor “case review system” as an example, a determination of substantial conformity using the method described above would occur as follows:

In this example, the systemic factor “case review system” has five State plan or program requirements subject to review. The statewide assessment indicates that there are

procedures and policies in place statewide that address the following requirements for this systemic factor:

- The requirement that each child have a written case plan with the required content
- The requirement that the status of each child in foster care is reviewed no less frequently than once every 6 months
- The requirement that permanency hearings are held as required
- The requirement that termination of parental rights petitions are filed under the required circumstances
- The requirement that foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care are notified of reviews and hearings held with respect to the child

In summary, all five State plan or program requirements are in place according to the statewide assessment, although we cannot determine from the statewide assessment whether they are functioning properly.

The onsite review indicates the following information, based on stakeholder interviews:

- The case plan requirements are met consistently statewide and in the three local review sites.
- The procedures for periodic review are in place in all three local review sites, but the reviews do not occur on a timely basis in two of the sites.
- The procedures for permanency hearings are in place statewide, but the hearings are not held according to the requirements in State and Federal law in any of the three local review sites.
- The procedures for termination of parental rights are in place and functional in all three local review sites.
- The required parties are notified of hearings in all locations.

In combination, the information from the statewide assessment and the onsite review indicates that three of the five State plan or program requirements for the systemic factor “case review system” are in place statewide and functional. The onsite review determines that two of the requirements, periodic reviews and permanency hearings, are in place but fail to function as required. Therefore, the State would be rated a “2” according to the table on the preceding page, since more than one of the requirements fails to function properly. The State would not be in substantial conformity on the systemic factor “case review system.”

## **C. Resolving Discrepancies Between the Statewide Assessment and the Onsite Review**

In some situations, the statewide aggregate data, or information in the statewide assessment, may not be consistent with the information on corresponding performance indicators obtained during the onsite review. For example, the statewide data on foster care re-entries may indicate the State is not within the national standard, although the onsite review of cases indicates satisfactory performance in that area. In those situations, the discrepancy between the two sets of information must be resolved in order to make a determination about substantial conformity.

In order to resolve the discrepancies where they exist, the Regional Office will provide the State with the option of:

- Submitting additional information that explains or resolves the discrepancy, such as additional data or other evidence that explain or support a determination of substantial conformity, or
- Reviewing additional cases, selected from the original samples of 150 cases pulled for the review.

If the State chooses to submit additional information, it can be in the form of additional aggregate data, special studies, quality assurance review findings, or other similar information.

If the State chooses to have additional cases reviewed on site, the number of additional cases, when combined with the original sample of 30–50 cases reviewed, will comprise a statistically significant sample with a compliance rate of 90 percent (95 percent in reviews beyond the initial review), a tolerable sampling error of 5 percent, and a confidence coefficient of 95 percent. Typically, the number of cases needed to comprise a statistically significant sample at this level is around 150 cases. Statisticians in the Central Office will be available to assist Regional Office staff in determining the exact number of additional cases to be pulled. The additional cases, reviewed by a joint State and Federal team, will only be reviewed for the performance indicator, outcome, or systemic factor in question and will cover the same time period as the original review. The conclusions made from reviewing the additional cases, in combination with the original cases reviewed, will form the basis for determining substantial conformity.

The timing, process, and review team associated with the review of additional cases will be determined by the Regional Office, depending upon the number and complexity of the discrepancies to be resolved. The review of additional cases, where needed, will follow the onsite review as quickly as possible so that a prompt and accurate determination of substantial conformity can be made.

The following is an example of resolving a discrepancy between the statewide assessment and the findings of the onsite review.

### **C.1 Example of Resolving a Discrepancy**

This example involves the performance indicator “stability of foster care” from the earlier example of determining substantial conformity on an outcome.

For Permanency Outcome #1, “stability of foster care” is both a statewide aggregate data indicator and one of the performance indicators rated in the cases reviewed on site. In the example described in section A.4 of this chapter, the statewide aggregate data on stability of foster care indicated that the State did not meet the national standard. However, assume that the reviewers determined that the performance indicator “stability of foster care” was a strength in the cases reviewed.

In this example, the State chooses to provide additional information on the indicator to resolve the discrepancy between the information from the statewide assessment and the findings of the onsite review. We present two possible scenarios resulting from the States providing additional information:

- Scenario 1: The State analyzes the aggregate data on “stability of foster care,” including county-by-county breakdowns of the data. The analysis indicates that the State, as a whole, fails to meet the national standard, but that the stability of foster care in some counties in the State, including the local review sites of the onsite review, met the national standard. The State also provides detailed data showing steady improvements over time in the stability of foster care placements. However, the additional data fail to establish that the State as a whole meets the national standard on this statewide aggregate data indicator. Therefore, the discrepancy is resolved by determining that the State’s performance on the indicator “stability of foster care” does not meet the national standard for purposes of determining the State’s substantial conformity on Permanency Outcome #1.
- Scenario 2: The State provides additional data on “stability of foster care” from an AFCARS submission that is more recent than the submissions from which the permanency data profiles for the statewide assessment were created. These data demonstrate clearly that the State has met the national standard for this statewide aggregate data indicator, which is consistent with the findings of the onsite review. An analysis of the more recent data, compared to a set of prior AFCARS submissions, indicates that the State has made steady improvements over time in the stability of foster care placements and has only recently achieved compliance with the national standard. Having met the national standard obviates the need for a PIP to bring the State’s performance on the indicator up to standard. Therefore, the discrepancy is resolved by determining that the statewide aggregate data indicator “stability of foster care” meets the national standard for purposes of determining substantial conformity on Permanency Outcome #1.

# Chapter 7

## Program Improvement Plans

### A. Criteria for Developing a Program Improvement Plan

The State must develop a program improvement plan (PIP) when:

- The review indicates that the achievement level of any one of the seven outcomes falls below the threshold for substantial conformity.
- The review indicates that the State falls below the threshold for substantial conformity on any one of the systemic factors subject to review.

### B. Content of the PIP

The format of the PIP may vary, but the plan must include the following components:

- The PIP must address each outcome that has been determined not to be in substantial conformity. For each outcome found not to be in substantial conformity, the PIP must address the onsite performance indicators or statewide aggregate data, noted in the final report, that contributed to the low achievement level of the outcome.
- The PIP must address each systemic factor found not to be in substantial conformity. For each systemic factor determined not to be in substantial conformity, the PIP must address each State plan requirement noted in the final report that contributed to a determination of nonconformity on the systemic factor.
- The PIP must include an action strategy to bring each outcome or systemic factor not in substantial conformity up to a level of substantial conformity, as specified in the Regulation, including the following elements:
  - Priorities for correcting areas of nonconformity, beginning with areas that directly affect the safety of children
  - Steps necessary to improve performance
  - Timeframes for accomplishing each step
  - Individuals responsible for carrying out the various steps

- The geographical areas of the State where efforts will be undertaken or targeted
  - A description of how progress will be evaluated, including measurable benchmarks of progress
  - A description of how the Regional Office will know that conformity has been achieved by the State
- For each statewide aggregate data indicator that is determined to be out of conformity with the national standard, the PIP must include a specific percentage of improvement that will be achieved over the duration of the plan, with which the State and Regional Office have concurred.
  - For each outcome or systemic issue addressed, the State must describe the technical assistance resources it plans to use to improve performance. Although States are not required to use the National Resource Centers (NRCs) as sources of technical assistance, if the State plans to use the centers for technical assistance, the State and the Regional Office should jointly develop a strategy for using the centers.
  - In outcome areas that have particularly adverse effects on families and children served by the agency, and those requiring long-term solutions, both short-term and long-term goals and strategies should be included in the PIP in order to address immediate needs and plans for lasting reforms.
  - The PIP must include a description of how progress on the plan will be evaluated by the State and reported to the Regional Office, including the frequency and format of the evaluation procedures.

In determining the amount of improvement that a State must achieve through the PIP with regard to statewide aggregate data indicators that fall below the national standard, the following criteria should be used:

- The amount of improvement must be stated in the PIP in terms of absolute percentage points to be achieved.
- If the amount of progress to be achieved through the PIP does not reach the national standard, the amount negotiated between the State and the Regional Office must be significant enough to move the State toward compliance with the national standard in a reasonable period of time.
- The amount of progress to be achieved should be consistent with the level of effort required by the State to improve its performance on the data indicators.



- The amount of progress to be achieved should be determined with consideration of current or prior efforts to improve performance in the State, and it should build on any program improvement planning initiatives underway.
- The amount of progress to be achieved should be determined with consideration of the length of time needed for program improvements to be reflected in the statewide data indicators.

(Note: When the national standards are established, the Children's Bureau expects to provide additional guidance on the amount of improvement that Regional Offices may negotiate with States, based on statistics pertaining to the indicators, e.g., the range of performance on indicators by States and deviation from the standard.)

### **C. Preparation of the PIP**

Preparation of the PIP is an extension of the collaborative planning process used by the State in developing its 5-year Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP), by including members of the title IV-B planning group in developing the PIP and tying improvements to the goals and strategies of the CFSP, particularly long-range improvements. Responsibility for developing the PIP rests with the State child welfare agency in collaboration with the Regional Office. To the extent possible, State members of the review team, including those from outside the State agency, will be actively involved in developing the PIP.

The State must submit its PIP to the Regional Office for approval within 90 calendar days from the date the State receives written notice from the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) that it is not operating in substantial conformity. Regional Office staff, in consultation with the Central Office as needed, will review the PIP and notify the State in writing of approval. If the ACF determines that revisions to the PIP are needed, the State must revise and submit the revised PIP to the ACF within 30 calendar days of receiving written notice from the ACF that the PIP was not approved by the ACF.

### **D. Technical Assistance**

To the extent possible, technical assistance needs should be coordinated with other program improvement efforts underway in the State, especially with the implementation of the State's 5-year CFSP. States have flexibility in deciding which providers of technical assistance can best address their needs. Particularly where long-range assistance is needed, emphasis must be placed on building capacity within the State to meet ongoing needs and sustain progress. For that reason, States are encouraged to

develop existing community and professional relationships as sources of ongoing technical assistance. Examples of this include:

- Using intra-State university social work programs for training and evaluation needs
- Using community groups as consultants or advisors to improve the agency's responsiveness to the community
- Coordinating the agency's improvement plans with similar plans developed through other publicly or privately funded initiatives in the State
- Using existing advocacy or consumer groups as consultants on policy development and practice issues

The sources of technical assistance most readily available from the ACF are the NRCs, funded by the ACF. The NRCs currently funded by the ACF that are available to provide training or technical assistance to States include the following:

- National Abandoned Infants Assistance Resource Center
- National Child Welfare Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice
- National Child Welfare Resource Center for Legal and Judicial Issues
- National Resource Center on Child Maltreatment
- National Resource Center for Community-Based Family Resource and Support Programs (FRIENDS)
- National Resource Center for Foster Care and Permanency Planning
- National Resource Center for Information Technology in Child Welfare
- National Resource Center for Organizational Improvement
- National Resource Center for Special Needs Adoption
- National Resource Center for Youth Development

Examples of other sources of technical assistance that may be arranged directly by the State or with the assistance of the Regional Offices include the following:

- Peer State consultation and assistance
- National organizations and foundations
- Private providers and agencies
- National experts

## **E. Role of Regional Office in Coordinating Technical Assistance**

States will request the assistance of the NRCs in implementing their PIPs from the designated Regional Office staff member, who will coordinate the technical assistance request with the NRC.

The amount of technical assistance that a State receives through the NRCs to implement a PIP depends, in part, upon the level of need for technical assistance identified in the plan.

The work of the NRCs is currently prioritized toward providing technical assistance to States that are implementing PIPs in order to achieve substantial conformity through the child and family services reviews. Decisions about the amount of technical assistance available to States through the NRCs will be made jointly by the Regional Office and the Central Office.

Regional Offices must coordinate the provision of technical assistance through the NRCs in a manner that provides maximum benefit to the States within the timeframes specified for completion of the PIP. A coordinated technical assistance response is particularly important when States are determined not to be in substantial conformity on multiple outcomes or systemic factors and there is a need for more than one source of technical assistance.

The Regional Offices have an important role in assisting the State to develop the portion of its PIP that concerns technical assistance. That role includes the following responsibilities:

- Familiarize States with the various NRCs and their functions
- Assist the State to identify areas of nonconformity that can best be addressed by individual NRCs
- Make referral to the NRCs for technical assistance
- Involve the NRCs in the development of the PIP with the State to the extent needed and appropriate

- Assist the State to develop a strategy, within the PIP, for using technical assistance from the NRCs that avoids duplication of effort, targets technical assistance to the most appropriate areas of need, and provides for most efficient use of both free and purchased technical assistance
- Ensure that the technical assistance provided by the NRCs complements and is coordinated with technical assistance that is provided through other sources
- Monitor the provision of technical assistance to the State by the NRCs, as part of monitoring the overall implementation of the PIP

## **F. Timeframes for Implementing the PIP**

The time period for completing the PIPs will not exceed 2 years. Not all components of the plan will require a full 2 years to implement, and this timeframe is provided as an outside limit for those elements of the plan requiring more extensive planning and action steps.

Where the State has been determined not to be in substantial conformity due to child safety issues, those components of the PIP pertaining to child safety must be implemented in less than 2 years (45 Code of Federal Regulation [CFR] 1355.35 (d)(2)). Child safety issues must receive priority in developing and implementing the PIP.

In the event the State is required to make major improvements that are too complex or extensive to implement within 2 years, the Secretary of the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services may grant up to a 1-year extension to the 2-year timeframe for completing the PIP, extending the maximum implementation period to 3 years. The request for an extension will only be approved in highly exceptional situations. The primary criterion for approving extensions to the PIP will be the complexity of the improvements to be made, not the failure of the State to act in a timely manner in implementing the components of the PIP.

When needed, the ACF and the State may renegotiate the terms and conditions of the PIP under the following conditions:

- The renegotiated plan must be designed to correct areas of the State's programs determined not to be in substantial conformity.
- The total time period for implementing the plan may not exceed the maximum of 3 years.
- The ACF must approve the renegotiated plan.

States requesting an extension of the PIP up to a third year must submit the request in writing to the Regional Office with supporting documentation that the extension is

necessary to make the required improvements. The written request must be received by the Regional Office 60 days prior to the approved completion date of the PIP. The Regional Office will submit the request, along with the supporting information and the recommendation of the Regional Office, to the Central Office of the ACF for review and decisionmaking by the Secretary.

## **G. Evaluating the Implementation of the PIP**

The Regional Office, in collaboration with the State, will evaluate the State's substantial conformity with the terms and conditions of its approved PIP, including the achievement of the benchmarks included in the PIP.

The State must provide written progress reports to the Regional Office no less frequently than quarterly, unless the Regional Office and the State mutually agree that less frequent reporting is necessary. The quarterly progress reports must include sufficient detail to describe the progress made during the reporting period, including data or other measurable indicators, along with the timeframes covered by the data, that address the specific timeframes and benchmarks of progress included in the PIP.

Penalties are suspended while the State is implementing the approved PIP. However, if the ACF determines that the State has failed to meet critical benchmarks toward achieving substantial conformity on specific outcomes or systemic factors within the timeframes of the approved plan, the ACF will cease suspension of the penalties and begin immediate withholding of funds related to the outcome or systemic factor to which the penalty applies.

As individual components of the program improvement plan are determined by the ACF to be complete, to the degree that substantial conformity in a particular area has been achieved, the ACF will find the State to be in substantial conformity in that area prior to the end date of the plan. At that point, withholding of funds related to the particular outcome or systemic factor will be rescinded. In other words, individual components of the plan will be declared completed or achieved throughout the duration of the plan, not just at the end of the plan.

If the ACF cannot determine from evaluating the progress of the PIP that the State has achieved substantial conformity, a determination of substantial conformity will be made at the next scheduled review.



# **Appendices**





## **Appendix A**

### **Index of Onsite Performance Indicators and Statewide Aggregate Data to Outcomes**



## **Index of Onsite Performance Indicators and Statewide Aggregate Data to Outcomes**

- **Safety**

**Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.**

- Timeliness of initiating investigations on reports of child maltreatment (onsite)
- Recurrence of maltreatment (onsite and statewide aggregate data)
- Incidence of child abuse and/or neglect in foster care (statewide aggregate data)

**Children are safely maintained in their own homes whenever possible and appropriate.**

- Services to family to protect children in home and prevent removal (onsite)
- Risk of harm to child (onsite)

- **Permanency**

**Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.**

- Incidence of foster care re-entries (onsite and statewide aggregate data)
- Stability of foster care placement (onsite and statewide aggregate data)
- Length of time to achieve reunification (statewide aggregate data)
- Length of time to achieve adoption (onsite and statewide aggregate data)
- Permanency goal for child (onsite data)
- Provision of independent living services (onsite data)
- Permanency goal of other planned living arrangement (onsite data)

**The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.**

- Proximity of foster care placement (on site)
- Placement with siblings (on site)
- Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care (on site)
- Preserving connections (on site)
- Relative placement (on site)
- Relationship of child in care with parents (on site)

- **Child and Family Well-Being**

**Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.**

- Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents (on site)
- Child and family involvement in case planning (on site)
- Worker visits with child (on site)
- Worker visits with parents (on site)

**Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.**

- Educational needs of the child (on site)

**Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.**

- Physical health of the child (on site)
- Mental health of the child (on site)

# **Appendix B**

## **Statewide Assessment**



August 2000

*OMB Control No: 0970-0214*  
*Expiration date: 04/30/2003*

# **Child and Family Services Reviews:**

## **Statewide Assessment**

**Children's Bureau  
Administration on Children, Youth and Families  
Administration for Children and Families  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**





## **Introduction**

The child and family services reviews, regulated by the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) and facilitated by the Social Security Act Amendments of 1994, are designed to support a stronger Federal-State partnership in improving the outcomes of services to children and families. The review strategy seeks to achieve this by linking review of State child and family services to joint planning and technical assistance and emphasizing continuous improvement in State child welfare systems. The reviews include three outcome domains that cover the continuum of child welfare services: safety, permanency, and child and family well-being, as well as an examination of State and local agency characteristics that affect the achievement of positive outcomes.

This instrument, “Child and Family Services Reviews: Statewide Assessment,” is completed in the first stage of the review process by the State, in consultation with State representatives external to the State agency and ACF Regional and Central Office staff. The second stage of the review process is an onsite review, conducted by a team of State and Federal representatives, peer reviewers, and external reviewers. “Child and Family Services Reviews: Onsite Review Instrument” is used for the onsite case reviews, and the Stakeholder Interview Guide is used for the onsite stakeholder interviews. Information from the statewide assessment and the onsite review is used to make determinations about the States’ substantial conformity with the State plan and other program requirements under review.

Section I of the statewide assessment requests general information about the State agency. Section II focuses on State child welfare agency characteristics and requires narrative responses on systemic factors, based on data to the extent available to the State. Section III includes data profiles for the safety and permanency outcomes, including the statewide aggregate data indicators used to determine substantial conformity. Section IV requires a narrative assessment of the outcome areas based on the data profiles in section III. Section V requires the State to assess its strengths and needs and identify issues and locations for further examination through the onsite review. The data profiles in section III are based on the Adoption Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) and National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) data that are provided by the ACF to the State when the State initiates the statewide assessment.

The statewide assessment must be completed in collaboration with State representatives who are not staff of the State agency, pursuant to 45 Code of Federal Regulation (CFR) 1355.33 (b). Those individuals should represent the sources of consultation required of the State in developing its title IV-B State plan. The names of external representatives who participated in developing the statewide assessment must be listed in section V of the instrument.

The instrument is available electronically through the Children's Bureau Web site at [www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cb).

THE PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13)

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 240 hours for the initial review and 120 hours for subsequent reviews. This estimate includes the time for reviewing instructions, completing the assessment, and reviewing the collection of information.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

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# Statewide Assessment Instrument

## Section I - General Information

<b>Name of State Agency</b>	
<b>Period Under Review</b>	
Federal Fiscal Year for Onsite Review Sample _____ Period of AFCARS Data _____ Period of NCANDS Data (or other approved source; please specify alternative data source) _____	
<b>Contact Person</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	_____
<b>Title:</b>	_____
<b>Address:</b>	_____
	_____
	_____
	_____
<b>Phone</b>	(    )    -                      Fax (    )    -
<b>E-Mail</b>	

## Section II - Systemic Factors

### A. Statewide Information System Capacity

1. Discuss how effectively the State is able to meet the State plan requirement that it operates a Statewide information system that can determine the status, demographics, location, and goals for all children in foster care in the State. In responding, consider the accessibility of this information to State managers and local staff and the usefulness of the information in carrying out the agency's responsibilities.

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### B. Case Review System

1. How effectively is the State able to meet the requirement that each child in foster care under the State's placement and care responsibility have a written case plan with all the required elements?

--

2. How effectively is the State able to meet the case review system requirement that parents of children in foster care participate in developing the child's case plan? In responding, consider their participation in activities such as identifying strengths and needs, determining goals, requesting specific services and evaluating progress related to their children.

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3. Citing any data available to the State, discuss how effectively the State is meeting the requirement that the status of each child in foster care be reviewed periodically, i.e., at least every 6 months, by a court or by administrative review.

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4. Citing any data available to the State, discuss how the State meets the requirement that permanency hearings for children in foster care occur within prescribed timeframes. Discuss the effectiveness of these hearings in promoting the timely and appropriate achievement of permanency goals for children.

5. Citing any data available to the State, discuss how the State meets the requirement to provide foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care with notice of and an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child in their care.

### **C. Quality Assurance System**

1. Discuss how the State has complied with the requirement at section 471 (a)(22) of the Social Security Act to develop and implement standards to ensure that children in foster care placements are provided quality services that protect their health and safety, and any effects of implementing the standards to date.

2. Discuss the effectiveness of the agency's quality assurance system in helping to ensure safety, permanency, and well-being for children served by the agency and their families in all jurisdictions of the State. In responding, discuss the jurisdictions in the State covered by the quality assurance procedures, the capacity of the system to evaluate the adequacy and quality of the State's child and family services system, and its capacity to produce information leading to program improvements.

### **D. Staff and Provider Training**

1. Citing any data available to the State on the numbers and timeframes of staff trained, discuss the effectiveness of the State's initial and ongoing training for all child welfare staff employed by the agency that includes the basic skills and knowledge required for their positions.

2. Citing any data available to the State, discuss the effectiveness of the State’s training of current and prospective foster and adoptive families and the staff of State-licensed or approved child care institutions that care for children in the State’s care or responsibility that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties.

#### **E. Service Array and Resource Development**

1. Discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the title IV-B State plan requirement to provide services designed to help children safely and appropriately return to families from which they have been removed.

2. Discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the title IV-B State plan requirement to provide preplacement preventive services designed to help children at risk of foster care placement remain safely with their families.

3. Discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the title IV-B State plan requirement to provide services designed to help children be placed for adoption, with a legal guardian, or if adoption or legal guardianship are determined not to be appropriate for a child, in some other planned, permanent living arrangement.

4. Describe the extent to which all the services in items 1–3 above are accessible to families and children on a statewide basis.



## **F. Agency Responsiveness to Community**

1. Discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the requirement to consult and coordinate with external community stakeholders in the development of the State's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP). In responding, discuss how the concerns of stakeholders are addressed in the agency's planning and operations and their involvement in evaluating and reporting progress on the agency's goals.

--

2. Discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the State plan requirement to coordinate its services with the services and benefits of other public and private agencies serving the same general populations of children and families.

--

3. Does the agency have any agreements in place with other public or private agencies or contractors, such as juvenile justice or managed care agencies, to perform title IV-E or IV-B functions? If so, how are services provided under the agreements or contracts monitored for compliance with State plan requirements or other program requirements and accurate eligibility determinations made, where applicable?

--

4. Citing any data available, discuss how effective the State has been in meeting State plan requirements for determining whether children are American Indian and ensuring compliance with the Indian Child Welfare Act.

--

## **G. Foster and Adoptive Home Licensing, Approval, and Recruitment**

1. Discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the requirement to establish and maintain standards for foster family homes, adoptive homes, and child care institutions in which children served by the agency are placed.

--

2. Citing any data available to the State, discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the State plan requirement to ensure that the State's licensure standards are applied equally to all foster and adoptive homes and child care institutions that serve children in the State's care or custody.

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3. Citing any licensure or safety data available to the State, discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the State plan requirements to conduct criminal background clearances on prospective foster and adoptive families, including those being licensed or approved by private agencies in the State. How does the State address safety considerations with respect to the staff of child care institutions and foster and adoptive families (if the agency has opted not to conduct criminal background clearances on foster care and adoptive families)?

--

4. Citing any data available to the State, discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the State plan requirement to recruit and retain foster and adoptive families that represent the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed, including the effectiveness of the State's official recruitment plan.

--

5. Citing any data available to the State, discuss how effective the State has been in meeting the State plan requirement to recruit and use adoptive families for waiting children across State or other jurisdictional boundaries. In responding, consider relevant agency policies, timeframes for initiating recruitment activities, and specific methods.

--

### Section III - Safety and Permanency Data

I. CHILD SAFETY PROFILE	Calendar Year XXXX						Calendar Year XXXX						Calendar Year XXXX					
	Reports	%	Duplic. Chn. <sup>2</sup>	%	Uniq. Chn. <sup>2</sup>	%	Reports	%	Duplic. Chn. <sup>2</sup>	%	Uniq. Chn. <sup>2</sup>	%	Reports	%	Duplic. Chn. <sup>2</sup>	%	Uniq. Chn. <sup>2</sup>	%
I. Total CA/N Reports Disposed <sup>1</sup>																		
II. Disposition of CA/N Reports <sup>3</sup>																		
Substantiated & Indicated																		
Unsubstantiated																		
Other																		
III. Child Cases Opened for Services <sup>4</sup>																		
IV. Children Entering Care Based on CA/N Report <sup>5</sup>																		
V. Child Fatalities <sup>6</sup>																		
STATEWIDE AGGREGATE DATA USED TO DETERMINE SUBSTANTIAL CONFORMITY																		
VI. Recurrence of Maltreatment <sup>7</sup>																		
VII. Incidence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care <sup>8</sup>																		

## **Footnotes To Data Elements In Child Safety Profile**

1. The data element “Total CA/N Reports Disposed” is based on the reports received in the State that received a disposition in the reporting period under review. The number shown may include reports received during a previous year that received a disposition in the reporting year. Counts based on “reports,” “duplicated counts of children,” and “unique counts of children” are provided.
2. The duplicated count of children (report-child pairs) counts a child each time that (s)he was reported and received a disposition. The unique count of children counts a child only once during the reporting period, regardless of how many times the child was reported.
3. The data element “Disposition of CA/N Reports” is based on the highest disposition of any child who was the subject of an investigation in a particular report. For example, if alleged maltreatment was investigated for two children, and the State counts the investigation as one report, and one child is found to be neglected and the other child found not to be maltreated, the report disposition will be substantiated. The disposition for each child is based on the specific finding related to the maltreatment. In other words, of the two children above, one is a victim and is counted under “substantiated,” and the other is not a victim and is counted under “unsubstantiated.” In determining the unique counts of children, the highest finding is given priority. If a child is found to be a victim in one report, but not a victim in a second report, the unique count of children includes the child only as a victim. A child is counted as a victim if an alleged maltreatment was either substantiated or indicated. In a number of States “indicated” is used if a child is at risk of maltreatment. With the agreement of the States, NCANDS has included these children as “victims of maltreatment.” The category of “other” includes children whose report may have been “closed without a finding,” children for whom the allegation disposition is “unknown,” and other dispositions that a State is unable to code as substantiated, indicated, or unsubstantiated.
4. The data element “Child Cases Opened for Services” is based on the number of children with a substantiated or indicated finding of maltreatment during the reporting period under review. (The current NCANDS Detailed Case Data Component [DCDC] does not collect service data on unsubstantiated reports. Starting in 2001, States will be submitting data on service responses related to unsubstantiated reports.) “Opened for services” refers to post-investigative services. The duplicated number counts each time a child’s report is linked to ongoing services; the unique number counts a child only once regardless of the number of times services are linked to reports of maltreatment.
5. The data element “Children Entering Care Based on CA/N Report” is based on substantiated and indicated reports disposed during the reporting period under review. (See above note on service data.) The duplicated number counts each time a child’s report is linked to a foster care removal date. The unique number counts a child only once regardless of the number of removals that may be reported.

6. The data element “Child Fatalities” counts the number of children reported to NCANDS as having died as a result of child abuse and/or neglect. Depending upon State practice, this number may count only those children for whom a case record has been opened either prior to or after the death, or may include a number of children whose deaths have been investigated as possibly related to child maltreatment. For example, some States include neglect-related deaths, such as those caused by motor vehicle or boating accidents, house fires, or access to firearms, under certain circumstances. The percentage is based on a count of unique victims of maltreatment for the reporting period.
7. The data element “Recurrence of Maltreatment” is defined as follows: Of all children who were victims of substantiated or indicated child abuse and/or neglect during the first 6 months of the reporting period, what percentage had another substantiated or indicated report within a 6-month period? The number of children with a recurrence and percentage of all children are provided. This data element is used to determine, in part, the State’s substantial conformity with Safety Outcome #1.
8. The data element “Incidence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care” is defined as follows: Of all children who were served in foster care during the reporting period, what percentage was the subject of substantiated or indicated maltreatment by a foster parent or facility staff? The number of children maltreated in foster care and the percentage of all children are provided. This data element is used to determine, in part, the State’s substantial conformity with Safety Outcome #1.

<b>II. POINT-IN-TIME PERMANENCY PROFILE</b>	<b>Federal FY XXXX</b>		<b>Federal FY XXXX</b>		<b>Federal FY XXXX</b>	
	<b># of Children</b>	<b>% of Children</b>	<b># of Children</b>	<b>% of Children</b>	<b># of Children</b>	<b>% of Children</b>
<b>I. Foster Care Population Flow</b>						
Children in Foster Care on First Day of Year						
Admissions During Year						
Discharges During Year						
Children in Care on Last Day of Year						
Net Change During Year						
<b>II. Placement Types for Children in Care</b>						
Preadoptive Homes						
Foster Family Homes (Relative)						
Foster Family Homes (Nonrelative)						
Group Homes						
Institutions						
Supervised Independent Living						
Runaway						
Trial Home Visit						
Missing Placement Information						
<b>III. Permanency Goals for Children in Care</b>						
Reunification						
Live With Other Relatives						
Adoption						
Long-Term Foster Care						
Emancipation						
Guardianship						
Case Plan Goal Not Established						
Missing Goal Information						
<b>IV. Number of Placement Settings in Current Placement</b>						
One						
Two						

Three						
Four						
Five						
Six or More						
Missing Placement Settings						
<b>V. Number of Removal Episodes</b>						
One						
Two						
Three						
Four						
Five						
Six or More						
Missing Removal Episodes						
<b>VI. Number of Children in Care 17 of the Most Recent 22 Months*</b>						
	<b>Number of Months</b>		<b>Number of Months</b>		<b>Number of Months</b>	
<b>VII. Median Length of Stay in Foster Care</b>						
	<b># of Children Discharged</b>	<b>Median Months to Discharge</b>	<b># of Children Discharged</b>	<b>Median Months to Discharge</b>	<b># of Children Discharged</b>	<b>Median Months to Discharge</b>
<b>VIII. Length of Time to Achieve Perm. Goal</b>						
Reunification/Relative Placement						
Adoption						
Guardianship						
Other						
Unknown (Missing Discharge Reason or N/A)						
<b>Statewide Aggregate Data Used in Determining Substantial Conformity</b>	<b># of Children</b>	<b>% of Children</b>	<b># of Children</b>	<b>% of Children</b>	<b># of Children</b>	<b>% of Children</b>
<b>IX.</b> Of all children who were reunified with their parents or caretakers at the time of discharge from foster care, what percentage was reunified in less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal for home?						



<b>X.</b> Of all children who exited care to a finalized adoption, what percentage exited care in less than 24 months from the time of the latest removal from home?						
<b>XI.</b> Of all children served who have been in foster care less than 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home, what percentage have had no more than two placement settings?						
<b>XII.</b> Of all children who entered care during the year, what percentage re-entered foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode?						

\*We designated the indicator “17 of the most recent 22 months” rather than the statutory timeframe for initiating termination of parental rights proceedings at “15 of the most recent 22 months” since the AFCARS system cannot determine the date the child is considered to have entered foster care as defined in the regulation. We used the outside date for determining the date the child is considered to have entered foster care, which is 60 days from the actual removal date.

III. PERMANENCY PROFILE FIRST-TIME ENTRY COHORT GROUP	Federal FY XXXX		Federal FY XXXX		Federal FY XXXX	
	# of Children	% of Children	# of Children	% of Children	# of Children	% of Children
<b>I. Number of Children Entering Care for the First Time in Cohort Group</b>						
<b>II. Most Recent Placement Types</b>						
Preadoptive Homes						
Foster Family Homes (Relative)						
Foster Family Homes (Nonrelative)						
Group Homes						
Institutions						
Supervised Independent Living						
Runaway						
Trial Home Visit						
Missing Placement Information						
<b>III. Most Recent Permanency Goal</b>						
Reunification						
Live With Other Relatives						
Adoption						
Long-Term Foster Care						
Emancipation						
Guardianship						
Case Plan Goal Not Established						
Missing Goal Information						
<b>IV. Number of Placement Settings in Current Episode</b>						
One						
Two						
Three						
Four						
Five						

Six or More						
Missing Placement Settings						
<b>V. Reason for Discharge</b>						
Reunification/Relative Placement						
Adoption						
Guardianship						
Other						
Unknown (Missing Discharge Reason or N/A)						
	<b>Number of Months</b>		<b>Number of Months</b>		<b>Number of Months</b>	
<b>VI. Median Length of Stay in Foster Care</b>						

## Section IV - Narrative Assessment of Child and Family Outcomes

### A. Safety

**Outcome S1:** Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

**Outcome S2:** Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

**Based on examination of the safety data elements on the safety data profile in section III, and the State Child and Family Services Plan (State IV-B plan), please respond to the following questions.**

1. **Trends in Safety Data.** Have there been notable changes in the individual data elements in the safety profile in Section III over the past 3 years in the State? Identify and discuss factors that have affected the changes noted and the effects on the safety of children in the State.

2. **Child Maltreatment (Safety Data Elements I & II).** Examine the data on reports of child maltreatment disposed during the year by disposition of the reports. Identify and discuss issues affecting the rate of substantiated vs. unsubstantiated reports and factors that influence decision-making regarding the disposition of incoming reports.

3. **Cases Opened for Services (Safety Data Element III).** Compare the cases opened for services following a report of maltreatment to the rates of substantiated reports received. Discuss the issues affecting opening cases following reports of maltreatment and reasons cases are or are not opened.

4. **Children Entering Foster Care Based on Child Abuse and/or Neglect (CA/N) Report (Safety Data Element IV).** Identify and discuss issues affecting the provision of home-based services to protect children from maltreatment and whether or not there is a relationship between this data element and other issues in the State, such as availability of services to protect children, repeat maltreatment, or changes in the foster care population.

5. **Child Fatalities (Safety Data Element V).** Identify and discuss child protection issues affecting child deaths due to maltreatment in the State and how the State is addressing the issues.

6. **Recurrence of Maltreatment (Safety Data Element VI).** Discuss whether or not the State's recurrence of maltreatment conforms to the national standard for this indicator, the extent to which the State's rate of recurrence of child maltreatment is due to the same general circumstances or same perpetrator, and how the State is addressing repeat maltreatment.

7. **Incidence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care (Safety Data Element VI).** Discuss whether or not the State's incidence of child maltreatment by the foster care provider conforms to the national standard for this indicator. Discuss the ways in which the State is addressing this issue and whether or not there is a need for additional measures to ensure the safety of children who are in foster care or preadoptive placements.

8. **Other Safety Issues.** Discuss any other issues of concern, not covered above or in the data profiles, that affect the safety outcomes for children and families served by the agency.

## **B. Permanency**

**Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.**

**Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.**

**Based on examination of the foster care data in the two foster care profiles in section III, and the State Child and Family Services Plan (State IV-B plan), please respond to the following questions.**

1. **Trends in Permanency Data.** Have there been notable changes in the individual data elements in the two permanency data profiles in section III over the past 3 years in the State? Identify and discuss any factors affecting the changes noted and the effects on permanency for children in foster care in the State.

2. **Foster Care Population Flow (Point-in-Time Data Element I & Cohort Data Element I).** Identify and discuss any issues raised by the data regarding the composition of the State's foster care population, rates of admissions and discharges, and changes in this area. Discuss the State's ability to ensure that the children who enter foster care in the State are only those children whose needs for protection and care cannot be met in their own homes.

3. **Placement Types for Children in Foster Care (Point-in-Time Data Element II & Cohort Data Element II).** How well is the State able to ensure that children are placed in the types of placements that are the most family-like and most appropriate for their individual needs, both at the time of initial entry into foster care and throughout their stay in foster care?

4. **Permanency Goals for Children in Foster Care (Point-in-Time Data Elements III & VIII and Cohort Data Elements III & V.)** Discuss the extent to which children in care are moving safely into permanent living arrangements on a timely basis and issues affecting the safe, timely achievement of permanency for children in the State.

5. **Achievement of Reunification (Point-in-Time Data Element IX).** Discuss whether the State's data regarding achievement of reunification within 12 months from the time of the latest removal from home conform with the national standards for this indicator. Identify and discuss issues affecting conformity and how the State is addressing the issues.

6. **Achievement of Adoption (Point-in-Time Data Element X).** Discuss whether the State's data on children exiting foster care to a finalized adoption within less than 24 months from the latest removal from home conform to the national standard for this indicator. Identify and discuss issues affecting the number of children placed for adoption in the State and how the State is addressing the issues.

7. **Termination of Parental Rights (TPR) (Point-in-Time Data Element VI).** Discuss the extent to which the State complies with the requirement at section 475(5)(E) of the act regarding termination of parental rights for children who have been in foster care 15 of the most recent 22 months, for abandoned infants, and for children whose parents have been convicted of the listed felonies. Identify and discuss the issues that affect timely termination of parental rights, where appropriate, including the use of the exceptions to the TPR provisions.

8. **Stability of Foster Care Placements (Point-in-Time Data Elements IV & XI and Cohort Data Element IV).** Using data element XI on the point-in-time permanency profile, discuss whether the percentage of children in the State who have been in foster care less than 12 months and have had more than two placement settings conforms to the national standard for this indicator. Using all three data elements noted above, identify and discuss the reasons for the movement of children in foster care in the State. If there are differences in placement stability for children newly entering the system (cohort data) compared with the total population of children in care (permanency data), identify and discuss those issues.

9. **Foster Care Re-Entries (Point-in-Time Data Elements V & XII).** Using data element XII, discuss whether the percentage of children who entered foster care during the period under review who had a prior entry into foster care within 12 months of a prior foster care episode conforms to the national standard for this indicator. Using both data elements, discuss the extent of foster care re-entries for all children in the State's placement and care responsibility, the issues affecting re-entries, and how the State is addressing the issues.

10. **Length of Stay in Foster Care (Point-in-Time Data Element VII & Cohort Data Element VI).** Using **data element VI in the cohort data profile**, discuss how length of stay in foster care for first-time foster care entries in the State compares with the national standard for this indicator (although this indicator is not used to determine substantial conformity). Examining the data on length of stay in both profiles, identify and discuss factors affecting length of stay in foster care and how the State is addressing the issues. If there are differences in the length of stay between children newly entering foster care in the State (cohort data) and the total population of children in care (permanency data), identify and discuss the reasons.

11. **Other Permanency Issues.** Discuss any other issues of concern, not covered above or in the data, that affect the permanency outcomes for children and families served by the agency.

### C. Child and Family Well-Being

**Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.**

**Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.**

**Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.**

**Based on any data the agency has available, please respond to the following questions.**

1. **Frequency of Contact Between Caseworkers and Children and their Families.** Examine any data the State has available about the frequency of contacts between caseworkers and the children and families in their caseloads. Identify and discuss issues that affect the frequency of contacts and how the frequency of contacts affects the outcomes for children and families served by the State.

2. **Educational Status of Children.** Examine any data the State has available regarding the educational status of children in its care and placement responsibility. How does the State ensure that the educational needs of children are identified in assessments and case planning and that those needs are addressed through services?

3. **Health Care for Children.** Examine any data the State has available regarding the provision of health care, including Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT), to children in its care and placement responsibility. How does the State ensure that the physical health and medical needs of children are identified in assessments and case planning activities and that those needs are addressed through services?

4. **Mental Health Care for Children.** Examine any data the State has available regarding the mental health needs and status of children in its care and custody. How does the State ensure that the mental health needs of children are identified in assessments and case planning activities and that those needs are addressed through services?

5. **Other Well-Being Issues.** Discuss any other issues of concern, not covered above or in the data, that impact on the well-being outcomes for children and families served by the agency.



## Section V - State Assessment of Strengths and Needs

**Based on examination of the data in section III and the narrative responses in sections II & IV, the State review team should respond to the following questions.**

1. What specific strengths of the agency's programs has the team identified?

2. What specific needs has the team identified that warrant further examination in the onsite review? Note which of these needs are the most critical to the outcomes under safety, permanency, and well-being for children and families in the State.

3. Which three locations, e.g., counties or regions, in the State are most appropriate for examining the strengths and concerns noted above in the onsite review?

4. Comment on the statewide assessment process in terms of its usefulness to the State, involvement of the entire review team membership, and recommendations for revision.

5. List the names and affiliations of the individuals who participated in the development of the statewide assessment (please specify their role).



## **Appendix C**

### **Onsite Review Instrument and Instructions**



**August 2000**

OMB Control No: 0970-0214  
Expiration date: 04/30/2003

**CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEWS  
ONSITE REVIEW INSTRUMENT**

**Face Sheet**

A. Name of State and county			
B. Review number			
C. Reviewer			
D. Date case reviewed			
E. Child(ren)'s name(s)			
F. Child(ren)'s race and ethnicity			
G. Child(ren)'s date(s) of birth (MM/DD/YY)			
H. Type of case reviewed		<b>Foster Care</b> (Child was in foster care for all or some portion of the review period)	
		<b>Child Protective Services</b> (Child was not in foster care for any portion of the review period)	
I. Date of current foster care placement (if applicable)			
J. Date child returned home (if applicable)			
K. Date case closed (if applicable)			
L. Indicate the cause of the agency's involvement with this child or family. Check all that apply and asterisk the primary reason.			
	Physical abuse		Mental/physical health of parent(s)
	Sexual abuse		Mental/physical health of child
	Emotional maltreatment		Substance abuse by parent(s)
	Neglect (not including medical neglect)		Substance abuse by child
	Medical neglect		Domestic violence in child's home
	Abandonment		Delinquency of child
	Child behavior		Other (specify)

THE PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13)

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 8 hours per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, reading case files and conducting interviews, and reviewing the collection of information.

An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

## SECTION I: SAFETY

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

### Item 1. Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment (Case Record, Interview With Caseworker)

	Over the life of the case?	During the period under review?
A. How many reports of suspected abuse or neglect have been received on children in the family?		
B. In how many of the reports were the investigations initiated in accordance with the State's timeframes and requirements for a report of that priority?		
C. In how many of the reports was face-to-face contact with the child made by the investigating worker within State agency guidelines?		

#### Exploratory Issues

- Priority level assigned to each report
- Agency requirements for initiating an investigation by priority level, i.e., timeframes, other requirements
- Agency requirements for having face-to-face contact with children in reports received
- When the investigating worker initiated the investigation
- What activities constitute "initiating investigations," e.g., face-to-face contact with child

<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>		<b>Not Applicable</b>
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Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.						
<b>Item 2. Repeat Maltreatment (Case Record, Interview with Caseworker)</b>						
				<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>No Multiple Reports</b>
A. Where there have been multiple substantiated or indicated reports of abuse or neglect on children in this family, have any of them involved						
1. The same perpetrator?						
2. The same general complaint?						
B. How many of the reports checked "yes" were received during the period under review?						
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The nature of each report</li> <li>▪ Relationship of the perpetrator to the child</li> <li>▪ When the reports were received</li> </ul>						
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>		<b>Not Applicable</b>

## DISCUSSION OF SAFETY OUTCOME #1

Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.

- Check the level of outcome achievement that best describes the extent to which this outcome is being or has been achieved, based on the interviews and case record review. In the box, support the level of outcome achievement selected by describing the indicators in the instrument that relate to the outcome.
- Both indicators (items 1 & 2) must be determined by the reviewer to be a “strength” in the case in order to rate this outcome as “substantially achieved.”

	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Outcome Not Applicable to This Case
Level of Outcome Achievement				

**Information from items 1 & 2 that supports rating**



Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.			
<b>Item 3. Services to Family to Protect Child(ren) in Home and Prevent Removal (Case Record, Interviews with Caseworker, Parents, Service Provider)</b>			
	Yes	No	N/A
A. Where there were substantiated or indicated reports of abuse or neglect or apparent risks of harm to children in the family during the period under review, did the agency provide or arrange for services to the family to protect the child(ren) in his/her own home prior to removal, if applicable, including family preservation, family support, or other placement prevention services? (N/A = not a case of abuse or neglect or no apparent risk of harm to the child)			
B. If no, state the reason.			
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Types of services provided or arranged to protect the child(ren)</li> <li>Appropriateness of inhome services for the family</li> <li>Reason services were not provided</li> <li>If not a case of substantiated abuse or neglect or apparent risk of harm to children, reason case was open</li> </ul>			
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>	
		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>	
<b>Not Applicable</b>			

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.			
<b>Item 4. Risk of Harm to Child(ren) - (Case Record, Interviews With Caseworker, Parents, Service Provider)</b>			
	Yes	No	N/A
A. For the period under review, was there a risk of harm to the child(ren) in the family that necessitated the child(ren)'s placement in foster care or providing services to the family?			
B. If yes, were efforts made by the agency to reduce or remove the risk of harm through specific interventions? (Not applicable = no risk of harm to the child)			
C. Are there indications that case decisions and planning around placement of the child(ren) from the home or reunification were based on concerns about the child(ren)'s health and safety? (N/A = no risk of harm to the child)			
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nature of the risk of harm</li> <li>▪ What is needed to reduce or remove the risk</li> <li>▪ How the risk is being addressed through services or other interventions</li> <li>▪ What decisions or plans are under way regarding removal or reunification</li> <li>▪ Were there reports of maltreatment requiring a response by the agency during the period under review</li> </ul>			
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>	
		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>	
<b>Not Applicable</b>			

## DISCUSSION OF SAFETY OUTCOME #2

Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.

- Check the level of outcome achievement that best describes the extent to which this outcome is being or has been achieved, based on the interviews and case record review. In the box, support the level of outcome achievement selected by describing the indicators in the instrument that relate to the outcome.
- Both indicators (items 3 & 4) must be determined by the reviewer to be a “strength” in the case in order to rate this outcome as “substantially achieved.”

	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Outcome Not Applicable to This Case
Level of Outcome Achievement				

**Information from items 3 & 4 that supports rating**

## SECTION II: PERMANENCY

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

### Item 5. Foster Care Re-entries (Case Record, Interviews With Caseworker, Parents)

	Yes	No
A. Has the child had multiple entries into foster care?		
B. Have any of them resulted from the same general reason?		
C. How many entries has the child had in foster care during the period under review?		

#### Exploratory Issues

- Reason child entered foster care each time
- Time frames for child's entries into foster care

Rating for this indicator: (Check one)		Strength		Area Needing Improvement		Not Applicable
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Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.			
<b>Item 6. Stability of Foster Care Placement (Case Record, Interviews With Caseworker, Foster Parents)</b>			
	Yes	No	No Changes
A. Did the child change placement settings during the current episode of foster care?			
B. If yes, how many placement changes occurred during the period under review?			
C. Did any of the placement changes occur for reasons not directly related to helping the child achieve the goals in his or her case plan?			
D. Is the current placement setting stable, i.e., no apparent threat of disruption?			
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reasons for moves</li> <li>▪ Timeframes of moves</li> <li>▪ Efforts to prevent unnecessary moves, if applicable</li> <li>▪ Correct match of placement setting to child's needs</li> <li>▪ How current placement is being supported by agency</li> <li>▪ Reasons for instability of placement, if applicable</li> </ul>			
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>	
		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>	
			<b>Not Applicable</b>

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.				
<b>Item 7. Permanency Goal for Child (Case Record, Interview With Caseworker)</b>				
A. What is the child's current permanency goal?				
B. How long has the goal been in place and unachieved? (Not applicable/Goal is achieved)				
C. If there are delays in achieving the permanency goal, to what are the delays attributable?				
	Yes	No	N/A	Exception Noted (Specify)
D. Are the services being provided in the case consistent with the stated permanency goal?				
E. If the child has been in foster care 15 of the most recent 22 months or meets other ASFA criteria for TPR, has the agency filed or joined a petition to terminate parental rights? (N/A = child has not been in foster care 15 of the most recent 22 months)				
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Changes or lack of changes in child's permanency goal</li> <li>Reasons for changes in goals</li> <li>Factors considered in decisionmaking about permanency goal</li> <li>Barriers to achieving current goal</li> <li>How services currently being provided promote achievement of current permanency goal</li> <li>Has child been in foster care for 15 of the most recent 22 months, is child an abandoned infant, or does child have parents who have committed a felony requiring TPR under ASFA</li> <li>Has an exception to the termination of parental rights requirement been taken and, if so, the basis for the exception</li> </ul>				
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>
				<b>Not Applicable</b>

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.


**Item 8. Independent Living Services - Complete only for children age 16 or older (Case Record, Interviews With Caseworker, Child, Foster Parent)**

	Yes	No	Child Not Age 16 or Older	Ind. Living or Emancipation Not Child's Goal
A. Does the child have a written independent living plan in the record?				
B. Are independent living services being provided consistent with the child's independent living plan?				

## Exploratory Issues

- Services the youth is receiving to prepare for independent living
- Extent to which services being provided match the youth's needs
- Need for additional independent living services
- How well prepared the youth will be to live independently upon emancipation or achievement of his or her permanency goal

Rating for this indicator: (Check one)	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	Not Applicable
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Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.					
<b>Item 9. Adoption – Complete only for children with a permanency goal of adoption (Case Record, Interviews With Caseworker)</b>					
	Yes	No	Not Applicable		
A. For children who are legally free for adoption, has an adoptive family been identified? (Not Applicable = Child not free for adoption)					
B. For children who are legally free for adoption, are there current delays (more than 60 days' duration) in placing the child in an adoptive family that are within the agency's ability to correct? (Not Applicable = Child not free for adoption)					
C. For children who are <u>not</u> legally free for adoption, are there delays (more than 60 days' duration) in freeing the child that are within the agency's ability to correct? (Not Applicable = Child is free for adoption)					
D. Are efforts currently being made to either locate, and place the child in, an adoptive family (if the TPR petition has been filed or the child is free for adoption) or free the child for adoption? If yes, describe efforts:					
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the child legally free for adoption</li> <li>Current efforts to identify an adoptive family or legally free the child for adoption</li> <li>Barriers to placing the child for adoption</li> <li>Barriers to freeing the child for adoption</li> </ul>					
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>



Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.						
<b>Item 10. Permanency Goal of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement - (Case Record, Interviews With Caseworker, Foster Parent, Child, and Parent)</b>						
<b>**Complete only for children with permanency goals of emancipation or a planned permanent living arrangement other than adoption, guardianship, or return to family **</b>						
					Yes	No
A. Is the child's permanency goal a planned living arrangement other than adoption, guardianship, or return to family? If yes, specify the permanent living arrangement.						
B. Have other, more permanent goals been considered and appropriately ruled out for the child?						
C. Are services being provided to help the child attain the goal of another planned living arrangement?						
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Factors that were considered in determining the goal</li> <li>Reasons this goal was selected rather than legal guardianship or adoption</li> <li>Reviews of the goal for continuing appropriateness since the goal was initially established</li> </ul>						
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>		<b>Not Applicable</b>

## DISCUSSION OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME #1

Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.

- Check the level of outcome achievement that best describes the extent to which this outcome is being or has been achieved, based on the interviews and case record review. In the box, support the level of outcome achievement selected by describing the indicators in the instrument that relate to the outcome.
- No more than one of the six indicators (items 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, & 10) may be determined by the reviewer to be an “area needing improvement” in order to rate this outcome as “substantially achieved.”

	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Outcome Not Applicable to This Case
Level of Outcome Achievement				

**Information from items 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, & 10 that supports rating**

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.				
<b>Item 11. Proximity of Foster Care Placement (Case Records, Interviews With Caseworker, Parents)</b>				
	Same Community	Same County	Out of County	Out of State
A. What is the proximity of the child's current, or most recent, placement to the parents?				
		Yes	No	N/A
B. For children placed outside the community or county of their parents' residence, is the reason for the location of the placement clearly related to helping the child achieve his or her case plan goals? (Not Applicable = Child not placed outside community or county of parents' residence)				
C. For children placed outside the State, is the child visited at least every 12 months by a caseworker of the supervising agency and a report filed to the agency holding custody? (Not Applicable = Child not placed outside the State)				
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Which parent is working with agency and most likely to be reunified with child</li> <li>Reasons for placement settings</li> <li>How the placement location supports or inhibits achieving the child's case plan goals</li> <li>Impact of placement location on maintaining important family and community connections</li> </ul>				
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>
				<b>Not Applicable</b>

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.			
<b>Item 12. Placement With Siblings (Case Record and Interviews)</b>			
	Yes	No	No siblings in foster care
A. If the child has siblings who also are in foster care, are they placed together?			
B. If no, is there clear evidence that separation is necessary to meet the needs of the children?			
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reasons siblings are not placed together, if applicable</li> <li>▪ Efforts made to place or keep siblings together</li> <li>▪ History of siblings' placement together, including reasons for prior separations</li> </ul>			
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>	
<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>			<b>Not Applicable</b>

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.						
<b>Item 13. Visiting With Parents and Siblings in Foster Care (Case Record, Interviews With Caseworker, Parents)</b>						
	Weekly	Bi-weekly	Monthly	Less than monthly	No visits	N/A
A. What is the most typical pattern of visiting frequency between the child and parents? (Not applicable = Contact with parents is contrary to child's permanency goal)						
B. What is the most typical pattern of visiting frequency between the child and siblings placed separately in foster care? (Not applicable = No siblings placed separately)						
				Yes	No	N/A
C. Are other forms of contact in place between the child and parents?						
D. Are other forms of contact in place between the child and siblings?						
E. Are visiting frequency and arrangements in accordance with State policy?						
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reasons for restrictions or prohibitions on visits</li> <li>Reasons for visiting less frequently than weekly</li> <li>Agency services/supports to encourage more frequent visiting</li> <li>Custody status of child, including termination of parental rights</li> </ul>						
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>		<b>Not Applicable</b>

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.							
<b>Item 14. Preserving Connections (Interviews with Caseworker, Parents, Foster Parents, Child)</b>							
				Substantially	Partially	Not at all	
A. Are the primary connections and characteristics of the child being preserved in the foster care placement?							
				Yes	No	N/A	
B. Are the interests of American Indian children being addressed through							
Placement with American Indian families?							
Referral to tribes?							
Other ICWA provisions? (Specify)							
(Not Applicable = Child not American Indian)							
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Primary connections of the child to neighborhood, community, family, friends</li> <li>▪ Unique characteristics of the family and child, including language, religion, values and beliefs, traditions, background, etc.</li> <li>▪ How they are addressed in the agency's work with the family and child</li> <li>▪ How the foster care provider supports these needs for the child in care</li> <li>▪ Is the child an American Indian child</li> </ul>							
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>			<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>		<b>Not Applicable</b>

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.			
<b>Item 15. Relative Placement (Case Record, Interviews With Caseworker, Child's Caretaker, Parents)</b>			
	Yes	No	N/A
A. Is the child in foster care placed with relatives?			
B. For children not placed with relatives, were relatives considered for placement of the child? (Not Applicable = Child placed with relatives)			
C. For children not placed with relatives, state the reason:			
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Extent to which relatives were sought out and evaluated</li> <li>▪ Reasons relatives were not evaluated, if applicable</li> <li>▪ Reasons relatives were not used for placement, if applicable</li> </ul>			
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>	
		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>	
<b>Not Applicable</b>			

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connection is preserved for children.			
<b>Item 16. Relationship of Child in Care With Parents (Interviews With Child, Parents, Foster Parent, Service Provider)</b>			
	Yes	No	N/A
A. Is there evidence of a strong, emotionally supportive relationship between the child in foster care and the child's parent(s)? (Not Applicable = Such a relationship is contrary to the child's safety or permanency goal)			
B. Where appropriate, has the agency made efforts to promote or maintain a strong, emotionally supportive relationship between the child in foster care and the child's parent(s)? (Not Applicable = Efforts not appropriate based on child's safety or permanency goal)			
C. If no for either A or B above, specify the reason:			
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Nature of current relationship from child's and parents' perspectives</li> <li>▪ Factors impacting the child/parent relationship</li> <li>▪ Parental participation in activities with child, e.g., school functions and special occasions</li> <li>▪ Parental decisionmaking regarding child's needs and activities</li> <li>▪ Agency efforts to support a positive relationship between child and parents</li> </ul>			
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>	
		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>	
			<b>Not Applicable</b>



## DISCUSSION OF PERMANENCY OUTCOME #2

Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.

- Check the level of outcome achievement that best describes the extent to which this outcome is being or has been achieved, based on the interviews and case record review. In the box, support the level of outcome achievement selected by describing the indicators in the instrument that relate to the outcome.
- No more than one of the six indicators (items 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, & 16) may be determined by the reviewer to be an “area needing improvement” in order to rate this outcome as “substantially achieved.”

	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Outcome Not Applicable to This Case
Level of Outcome Achievement				

**Information from items 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, & 16 that supports rating**

## SECTION III: CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

### Item 17. Needs and Services of Child, Parents, Foster Parents (Case Record, Interviews With Caseworker, Child, Parents, Foster Parents, Services Providers)

	Yes	No	N/A
A. Indicate below whether or not the major needs of the child, parents, and foster parents, as they relate to safety, permanency, and well-being, have been adequately assessed and identified.			
1. The child			
2. The child's parents (N/A = Services to parent are contrary to child's safety or permanency goal)			
3. The child's foster parents (Not Applicable = Child not in foster care)			
B. Indicate below whether or not the identified needs of the child, parents and foster parents are addressed through appropriate services including, where the need is indicated, community-based family support services, time-limited family reunification services, and adoption promotion and support services.			
1. The child			
2. The child's parents (N/A = Services to parent is contrary to child's safety or permanency goal)			
3. The child's foster parent (Not Applicable = Child not in foster care)			
List any services not provided for which a need was identified:			

#### Exploratory Issues

- What services are being provided in relation to current needs
- Match of services to needs
- Accessibility and availability of services, e.g., location, schedule, cost
- Worker accessibility to foster parents
- Is child placed in setting most appropriate and family-like, and suited to child's needs
- Are services intensive enough to meet identified needs

<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>		<b>Not Applicable</b>
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Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.						
<b>Item 18. Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning (Interviews With Caseworker, Parent(s), Child, Service Providers)</b>						
				Yes	No	N/A
A. Indicate below whether or not the parent(s) or guardian and child (when old enough) are actively involved in the case planning activities.						
1. Child (N/A = Child not old enough or incapacitated)						
2. Parent(s) (N/A = Parental involvement is contrary to child's safety or permanency goal)						
B. Are procedural safeguards in place with respect to parental rights pertaining to the removal of children from home, changes in placements, and visiting privileges? (N/A = Child not in foster care)						
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Involvement in identifying needs and services, establishing goals, and evaluating progress</li> <li>▪ Reasons for noninvolvement</li> <li>▪ Notification of parents when child is moved, changes made in visiting plans or case plans</li> </ul>						
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>		<b>Not Applicable</b>

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.									
<b>Item 19. Worker Visits With Child (Case Record, Interviews With Caseworker, Child, Foster Parents)</b>									
						Weekly	Bi-Weekly	Monthly	Less than monthly
A. What has been the most typical pattern of visiting frequency between the caseworker and the child during the last 6 months (or the last 6 months before the case was closed, if applicable)?									
B. Where visits are occurring less frequently than monthly, are there other agency staff, volunteers, or service providers, e.g., contract providers, who are visiting the child at least monthly? (N/A = Visits are occurring at least monthly or more frequently)							Yes	No	N/A
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child's needs for contacts with worker</li> <li>Factors impacting frequency of visits</li> <li>Reasons for infrequent visiting, if applicable</li> </ul>									
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>			<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>			<b>Not Applicable</b>	

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.					
<b>Item 20. Worker Visits With Parent(s) (Case Record, Interviews With Caseworker, Parent(s), Foster Parents)</b>					
A. What has been the most typical pattern of visiting frequency between the caseworker and the parent(s) during the last 6 months (or the last 6 months before the case was closed, if applicable)? (N/A = Visiting with parents is contrary to child's safety or permanency goal)	Weekly	Bi-Weekly	Monthly	Less than monthly	N/A
B. Where visits are occurring less frequently than monthly, are there other agency staff, volunteers, or service providers, e.g., contract providers, who are visiting the parent(s) at least monthly? (N/A = Visits are occurring at least monthly or more frequently)			Yes	No	N/A
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents' needs for contacts with worker</li> <li>Factors impacting frequency of visits</li> <li>Reasons for infrequent visiting, if applicable</li> </ul>					
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>

## DISCUSSION OF CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING OUTCOME #1

Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.

- Check the level of outcome achievement that best describes the extent to which this outcome is being or has been achieved based on the interviews and case record review. In the box, support the level of outcome achievement selected by describing the indicators in the instrument that relate to the outcome.
- No more than one of the four indicators (items 17, 18, 19, & 20) may be determined by the reviewer to be an "area needing improvement" in order to rate this outcome as "substantially achieved."

	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Outcome Not Applicable to This Case
Level of Outcome Achievement				

**Information from Items 17, 18, 19, & 20 that supports rating**

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.									
<b>Item 21. Educational Needs of the Child (Case Record, Interviews With Caseworker, Child, Foster Parents, Parents)</b>									
					Yes	No	N/A		
A. If the child is in foster care, has the child been enrolled in multiple schools as the result of being placed in foster care? (N/A = Child is either not school age or not in foster care)									
B. Indicate below whether or not the child's educational needs are being addressed in the following ways:									
1. Special education classes (N/A = No identified special education needs)									
2. Normal grade placement (N/A = Child not school age)									
3. Services for identified educational needs (N/A = No unusual educational needs noted)									
4. Early intervention for preschool children (N/A = Early intervention not needed)									
5. Inclusion of school records in case file (N/A = Child not school age or not in foster care)									
6. Advocacy with the education/school system (N/A = No identified needs/Child not school age)									
7. Attention to education in case planning (N/A = No identified needs/Child not school age)									
8. Giving child's education records to foster parents (N/A = Child not in foster care)									
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reasons for changing schools, if applicable</li> <li>Testing/evaluation to determine educational needs of child</li> <li>Current functioning in school</li> <li>Identified needs of child related to school performance</li> <li>Services provided to address educational needs</li> <li>Match of services to identified needs</li> <li>Worker activities to address educational needs</li> </ul>									
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>				<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>			<b>Not Applicable</b>

## DISCUSSION OF CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING OUTCOME #2

Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.

- Check the level of outcome achievement that best describes the extent to which this outcome is being or has been achieved, based on the interviews and case record review. In the box, support the level of outcome achievement selected by describing the indicators in the instrument that relate to the outcome.
- The one indicator for this outcome (item 21) must be determined by the reviewer to be a “strength” in order to rate this outcome as “substantially achieved.”

	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Outcome Not Applicable to This Case
Level of Outcome Achievement				

**Information from item 21 that supports rating**



Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				
<b>Item 22. Physical Health of the Child (Case Record, Interviews With Caseworker, Child, Foster Parents)</b>				
		Yes	No	N/A
A. If the child is in foster care, was an initial health screening (or other medical examination) provided within the timeframe specified in the State's guidelines? (N/A = Child not in foster care)				
	Substantially	Partially	Not at all	N/A
B. Indicate below whether or not the child's physical health needs are being addressed in the following way:				
1. Preventive health care				
2. Preventive dental care				
3. Immunizations				
4. Treatment for identified health needs (N/A = no identified needs)				
5. Treatment for identified dental needs (N/A = no identified needs)				
6. Giving health records to foster parents (N/A = child not in foster care)				
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>State's guidelines for timing of initial health examinations for children entering foster care</li> <li>How comprehensive medical examinations, beyond initial screenings, are handled</li> <li>Type and timing of initial screening received by child in foster care</li> <li>Recency of immunizations</li> <li>Periodicity of subsequent health screenings and preventive dental care</li> <li>Current identified health or dental needs</li> <li>How identified health and dental needs are being treated</li> <li>How the agency tracks medical needs and services</li> <li>Does foster parent (provider) have copies of child's health records</li> </ul>				
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>
				<b>Not Applicable</b>

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.				
<b>Item 23. Mental Health of the Child (Interviews With Caseworker, Parent, Foster Parent, Service Providers)</b>				
	Yes	No	No State Guidelines	N/A
A. If the child is in foster care, was an initial mental health screening or assessment provided upon entry into foster care (or within the timeframe specified in the State's guidelines, if applicable)? (N/A = Child not in foster care)				
	Substantially	Partially	Not at all	N/A
B. Indicate below whether or not the agency is addressing the child's mental health needs in the following ways:				
1. Assessment or screening				
2. Treatment for identified needs (N/A = No identified needs)				
<b>Exploratory Issues</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assessment for mental health needs at initial agency involvement or upon entering foster care</li> <li>Current mental health needs</li> <li>Services provided for mental health needs</li> <li>Match of services to identified needs</li> </ul>				
<b>Rating for this indicator: (Check one)</b>		<b>Strength</b>		<b>Area Needing Improvement</b>
				<b>Not Applicable</b>

### DISCUSSION OF CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING OUTCOME #3

Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

- Check the level of outcome achievement that best describes the extent to which this outcome is being or has been achieved, based on the interviews and case record review. In the box, support the level of outcome achievement selected by describing the indicators in the instrument that relate to the outcome.
- Both indicators for this outcome (items 22 & 23) must be determined by the reviewer to be a “strength” in order to rate this outcome as “substantially achieved.”

	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	Outcome Not Applicable to This Case
Level of Outcome Achievement				

**Information from Items 22 & 23 that supports rating**

### Case Rating Summary\*

\*Check the nonshaded box for each outcome and performance indicator that corresponds to the rating assigned by the reviewer.

Outcome or Performance Indicator	Perf. Indicator Ratings			Outcome Ratings			
	Strength	Area Needing Improvement	N/A	Substantially Achieved	Partially Achieved	Not Achieved	N/A
Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.							
Item 1: Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of maltreatment							
Item 2: Repeat maltreatment							
Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.							
Item 3: Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal							
Item 4: Risk of harm to child(ren)							
Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situation.							
Item 5: Foster care re-entries							
Item 6: Stability of foster care placement							
Item 7: Permanency goal for child							
Item 8: Independent living services							
Item 9: Adoption							
Item 10: Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement							
Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.							
Item 11: Proximity of foster care placement							
Item 12: Placement with siblings							
Item 13: Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care							
Item 14: Preserving connections							
Item 15: Relative placement							
Item 16: Relationship of child in care with parents							
Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.							
Item 17: Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents							
Item 18: Child and family involvement in case planning							
Item 19: Worker visits with child							
Item 20: Worker visits with parents							
Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.							
Item 21: Educational needs of the child							
Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.							
Item 22: Physical health of the child							
Item 23: Mental health of the child							

## **Instructions for Completing the Onsite Review Instrument Child and Family Services Reviews**

The Onsite Review Instrument is divided into a face sheet and three sections. The three sections cover the three outcome domains that form the basis for the child and family services reviews: “safety,” “permanency,” and “child and family well-being.” Items in each of the sections are labeled according to the specific outcome they are used to measure. They are also grouped in the instrument according to the outcome to which they apply. Each item pertains to only one outcome. The same instrument is used to review for foster care and inhome service cases. Items in “section II: Permanency” are only completed if the case is being reviewed as a foster care case.

The performance indicators, or items, in the Onsite Review Instrument are organized as follows:

- **Core Questions:** There are one or more core questions under each item that the reviewer must answer. Those are the first questions listed, and generally they require yes/no or check-off responses, although some may ask for additional information. The core questions are the primary questions in the instrument that will be used to review the outcomes, although the responses to the exploratory issues will be used to explain practices and to help identify areas where technical assistance may be useful to the State.
- **Exploratory Issues:** Following the core questions is a series of exploratory issues, which the reviewer should consider in determining or explaining the most accurate response to the core question. The exploratory issues, in some situations, will help lead the reviewer to the correct response to the core questions. In other situations, they will explain or elaborate upon the response. In the boxes below the exploratory issues, the reviewer should record information from the case record review and from interviews that addresses the issues and supports the response to the core questions.
- **Discussion of Information:** Each item includes a space for providing information related to the core questions and exploratory issues. It is important that the reviewer document in this space the information gathered from the case record and interviews with the relevant parties that supports the responses to the questions.
- **Rating of Indicator:** When sufficient information has been gathered from the case record and the interviews and the reviewer completes answering the item, a determination must be made as to whether or not the item is considered to be primarily a “strength” or an “area needing improvement” in the case being reviewed. The reviewer will have to weigh the circumstances of each individual case against the responses to the questions to make this determination. For example, in item 2 “Repeat Maltreatment,” multiple reports over the life of the case alone may or may not indicate that the item is an area needing improvement. The reviewer will need to consider such issues as: whether the multiple reports stem from the same circumstances or same perpetrator; whether the agency’s response leaves the child at risk of repeat maltreatment; the recency of the reports; and responses within the period under review, as opposed to practice that may have occurred beyond that period.

Each item in the Onsite Review Instrument is a performance indicator used to determine substantial achievement for the outcomes. Information needed to respond to each item will be gathered from the case record and from interviews with the various individuals involved in the case, i.e., the child, parents, foster parents, service providers, and caseworker. Where indicated, it is important to pursue the responses to questions through the interviews so that the review reflects what is actually happening in a case rather than simply what is documented in the case record.

The process for gathering information on each item in the Onsite Review Instrument is as follows:

- **Case Record Review:** At the beginning of the case review, the reviewer should read and become familiar with the instrument and the items that will require a response. Next, the reviewer should read the case record, responding to any core questions that are readily apparent and taking notes in the spaces provided for exploratory issues that are covered in the case record. “N/A” refers to not applicable rather than “not available” and should only be used if a particular item does not apply to the case being reviewed. Where possible, an explanation of the meaning of N/A for each question has been provided.
- **Interviews:** Following the case record review, the reviewer will interview those persons involved in the case with whom interviews have been arranged. The core questions and the exploratory issues will serve as the interview guides. The reviewer will need to prepare for each interview by identifying those exploratory issues listed on the instrument to be addressed by the person being interviewed. Notes of their responses should also be recorded, as appropriate, under each item.

After the case record has been reviewed, all the interviews have been completed and each core question on the instrument has a response and supporting documentation, the reviewer rates each item as either a “strength” or an “area needing improvement.” This task requires the reviewer to make a judgment about how each performance indicator is addressed in the individual cases. The circumstances in each individual case will determine whether the performance indicator is a “strength” or “area needing improvement.” In making these determinations, reviewers should consider such factors as recent practice, i.e., the period under review; efforts the agency has made to address the particular performance indicator; recurrence of negative circumstances, e.g., repeat maltreatment or re-entries into foster care due to the same reasons; adherence to the agency’s policies; positive or negative effects on the child and/or family as a result of the agency’s action or lack of action; appropriateness of the agency’s actions or interventions with regard to the indicator; and how well the individual needs of the child and family are addressed with regard to the indicator.

When each performance indicator in the instrument has been rated as a “strength” or an “area needing improvement,” the reviewer completes the Discussion of Outcome portion of the instrument that follows each series of items relating to one outcome.

The Discussion of Outcome sections require the reviewer to determine whether each outcome has been “substantially achieved,” “partially achieved,” or “not achieved” in the case. The criteria for determining the level of outcome achievement are noted for each outcome, based on whether the performance indicators are rated as “strengths” or not, in each Discussion of Outcome section. Each outcome is followed by the list of items (performance indicators) in the instrument that must be considered in making the determination. The reviewer should check the level of outcome achievement and document the basis for the conclusion in the space provided, based on the responses to the core questions referenced and the criteria noted. It is important to note areas of strength related to the outcomes that the reviewer observed as well as needs for improvement.

At the end of the Onsite Review Instrument, a Case Rating Summary sheet permits the reviewer to summarize the ratings on each outcome and performance indicator on one sheet. This facilitates the reviewers' briefing of cases during the review week and aids in compiling information from the entire review team into the final report.

At the conclusion of the review week, the reviewers on each review team will integrate their findings on individual cases into a more comprehensive report of the outcomes that identifies strengths and needs from the cumulative review of cases in a particular site (Summary of Findings and Recommendations). This report from individual teams will then be used to document the findings of the review for the State.

Reviewers must turn in each Onsite Review Instrument to the designated team leader prior to the end of the review week. Team leaders must turn in the completed Summary of Findings and Recommendations to the designated team member at the conclusion of the review week.

### **Item-by-Item Instructions**

**Face Sheet.** The items on the face sheet are self-explanatory. The case is to be considered a foster care case if the target child is or has been in foster care for any period of time during the period under review, and the entire Onsite Review Instrument will be completed on the child. Otherwise, the case should be reviewed as a child protective services case and the items in "section II: Permanency" will not be completed. If the case is being reviewed as a foster care case, enter the name of the target child in item E. If the case is being reviewed as an inhome case, enter the names of all the children in the case in item E.

**Section 1: Safety.** Items 1–4 apply to all reports of maltreatment received by the agency on any of the children in the family who were residing with the family at the time of the report.

**Item 1. Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment.** While no standard timeframes are prescribed across States for initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment, the reviewer must determine whether investigations in each of the reports were initiated within the timeframe specified in the State's policy for a report of that particular priority. An additional question in this item requests that the reviewer determine when the investigating worker actually saw the child or children who were the subject of the report, as part of the investigation activities. In order to help the reviewer focus on recent practice, a distinction is made between reports received at any time over the life of the case and reports received during the period under review.

**Item 2. Repeat maltreatment.** The issue addressed in this item is whether or not children in the family have had multiple substantiated reports of maltreatment arising from the same general conditions or by the same perpetrator. In order to help the reviewer focus on recent practice, a distinction is made between reports received at any time over the life of the case and reports received during the period under review.

**Item 3. Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal.** The issue addressed in this item is whether or not the agency provided services to protect the child(ren) in the home as an alternative to a foster care placement, where appropriate. If there are children in the family in foster care and others served at home, provide an explanation of services provided to the child(ren) in foster care and those served at home.

This item, in part, helps identify whether or not reasonable efforts were made to prevent removal of the child(ren) from the home. If the case was open for services for some reason other than a substantiated or indicated report of abuse or neglect, or an apparent risk of harm to the child, e.g., a juvenile justice case, note that information in the item. The definition of “substantiated” or “indicated” reports corresponds to the definitions used for the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS) data, as follows: “Substantiated” refers to an investigation in which the allegation of maltreatment or risk of maltreatment was supported or founded according to State law or State policy. “Indicated” means the allegation of maltreatment was indicated, or there was reason to suspect maltreatment, but it was unable to be founded, under State law or State policy.

**Item 4. Risk of harm to child.** For children in foster care, the issue is whether or not, during the period under review, there was a risk of harm to the child in the family’s home that warranted the child’s placement in foster care. For children served at home, the issue is whether or not the risk of harm to the child(ren) in the home was sufficient to necessitate the provision of services by the agency in order to protect the child(ren). In both instances, where a risk of harm to the child was present, the reviewer must determine whether the agency provided (or arranged) services that targeted the identified risks with the goal of reducing the risk. If the case was open for services for some reason other than a substantiated or indicated report of abuse or neglect, or an apparent risk of harm to the child, e.g., a juvenile justice case, note that information in the item. This item, in part, helps identify whether or not the child’s safety is the primary concern in the case.

**Section 2: Permanency.** The items in this section are to be completed on a specific child in foster care selected for the State’s foster care review sample.

**Item 5. Foster care re-entries.** Multiple entries refers to two or more admissions into the foster care system. The definition of “entry into care” corresponds to the definition used for Adoption and Foster Care Reporting System (AFCARS) data. A return to a foster care placement following a brief trial visit home would not count as a readmission unless the State had actually discharged the child from foster care. However, if the child remains on a trial home visit beyond 6 months, in the absence of a court order extending the visit beyond 6 months, and the child comes back into foster care, that is considered a re-entry. In this item, the reviewer is also asked to determine if any of the multiple admissions resulted from the same general circumstances. In order to help the reviewer focus on recent practice, a distinction is made between multiple entries at any time over the life of the case and multiple entries occurring during the period under review.

**Item 6. Stability of foster care placement.** The stability of the foster care placement refers to the extent to which the child’s current placement is determined to be free from the risk of an unplanned disruption in the foreseeable future. Any changes in placement settings should be recorded, e.g., moves from shelter to foster family home, moves from one foster family home to another, and so forth. Since some placement changes are planned in accordance with the child’s permanency goals, e.g., moving a child from an institution to a family-based setting, moving an out-of-county child closer to the family, etc., the reviewer is asked to identify the reasons for placement changes. In order to help the reviewer focus on recent practice, a distinction is made between placement changes at any time during the current foster care episode and placement changes occurring during the period under review. In order to be consistent with the definition of similar data elements used in AFCARS, the terms “current episode of foster care” and “changes in placement” have the following meanings. “Current episode in foster care” refers to the child’s current stay in foster care based on the most recent removal of the children from his or her normal place of residence resulting in his or her placement in a foster care



setting. “Changes in placement” refers to a change in the place where the child lives during an episode of foster care, excluding trial home visits. For purposes of the Child and Family Services (CFS) review, if the foster family with whom a child is placed moves, and the child moves with them, that does not constitute a change in placement.

**Item 7. Permanency goal for child.** The issues covered in this item are the extent to which children are remaining in foster care for lengthy periods of time with unachieved permanency goals, whether the stated permanency goal is viable for the child and family, and how the achievement of permanency is being addressed through services that the agency is providing to the child and family. The reviewer will need to determine whether the child has been in foster care for 15 of the past 22 months, is an abandoned child, or is a child whose parents have been convicted of one of the felonies designated in section 475 (5)(E) of the act, in order to determine whether a TPR petition or an exception to the TPR requirements in statute is required. In reviewing for delays in the child’s achievement of the permanency goal, the reviewer should note any and all applicable reasons for the delays.

**Item 8. Independent living services.** Complete this item for children age 16 or older in foster care, since independent living plans are required for this group of children. No specific independent living services are identified for this item. Rather, the reviewer must determine whether the individual needs of the child related to independent living have been identified and whether the services provided are matched to those needs.

**Item 9. Adoption.** This item addresses adoption issues for two groups of children: (1) those who have a plan of adoption and are legally free for adoption and (2) those who have a plan of adoption and are not legally free for adoption. Questions A and B refer to the first group and question C to the latter. Question D is used, in part, to determine the agency’s substantial conformity with ASFA requirements that the agency begin making efforts to identify an adoptive family for children with a goal of adoption when the TPR petition is filed (475 (5)(E)). Delays that are “within the agency’s ability to correct” refer to activities that are clearly the agency’s responsibility, such as initiating all appropriate recruitment activities, filing court petitions, initiating home studies on prospective adoptive families, completing administrative tasks, and so forth. Examples of delays “not within the agency’s ability to correct” include the failure of the court to free children for adoption, court appeals, lack of response to aggressive recruitment activities, and so forth.

**Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement.** This item should be completed only for children with a permanency goal of a planned living arrangement other than adoption, guardianship, or return to family. The item is used, in part, to determine the agency’s substantial conformity with ASFA requirements that services be provided to assist children to attain permanency in their living arrangements.

**Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement.** The reviewer responds to this item on the basis of the child’s current placement setting, or the most recent foster care placement if the child has been discharged from foster care. If there are two parents living separately, the reviewer must determine which parent is the most involved in case planning and is most likely to be reunified with the child. A specific definition of “same community” is not provided since it will vary by location. In determining if the child is placed in the same community, the reviewer may consider the boundaries of neighborhoods where they are identifiable, school districts, the actual distance between the parents’ home and the placement, and the general accessibility of the child in placement to family and other social institutions familiar to the child. Since some out-of-community placements will actually

meet the individualized needs of a child or keep the child in closer contact with family than a same-community placement, the reviewer must explain how the location of the placement affects these areas.

**Item 12. Placement with siblings.** In responding to this item, the reviewer should consider siblings with whom the child lived prior to foster care placement or with whom the child would be expected to live if the child was not in foster care. The issue being addressed in this item is the extent to which siblings are separated due to factors such as the availability of resources, disrupted placements, and such, as opposed to individual needs that can only be met in separate placements.

**Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care.** Reviewers should determine the most typical pattern of visiting in responding to this item, since the actual frequency may vary from time to time. Where visits occur infrequently, it is important that the reviewer use the exploratory issues to determine barriers to more frequent visiting. In addition to face-to-face visits, the reviewer should determine if other forms of contact are occurring, such as telephone and mail contact.

**Item 14. Preserving connections.** The child's connections refers to ties with family members and other related or nonrelated individuals with whom the child in foster care had a significant, positive relationship prior to entering foster care. The characteristics of the child, as used here, refers to those positive aspects of the values, beliefs, religion, language, traditions, and other factors that distinguish the identity of the child and the child's family. Item 14-B pertains specifically to American Indian children.

**Item 15. Relative placement.** The reviewer must determine the extent to which the agency identified relatives, within a reasonable degree of relationship, who were potential placement resources for the child in care and evaluated them for placement. Evaluation of relatives does not have to be in the form of a formal written assessment if the reviewer can determine from the interviews that they were actually identified and considered and the basis for not placing the child with the relative.

**Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents.** In evaluating the nature of the parent-child relationship while the child is in foster care, the reviewer must make qualitative judgments based on several factors. The reviewer should consider the child's and parent's expressed feelings toward each other, the evidence of sustained attachment throughout the placement, the level of ongoing involvement of the parent(s) in the child's life during the placement, the level of support the parent is able to give to the child in care, and the extent to which the integrity of the parent-child relationship is maintained. If there is not evidence of a supportive parent-child relationship, the reasons should be explored and noted, e.g., parents' whereabouts unknown, relationship would conflict with achievement of child's permanency goal, relationship would jeopardize child's safety, and so forth.

**Section 3: Well-Being.** If the instrument is being completed on a child in foster care, items 21–23 apply to that specific child only. If the instrument is being completed on a family receiving inhome services, the items apply to all children in the family who are residing with and included in the agency's services to the family. If there are multiple children in the family, the reviewer should consider the applicability of the questions to all the children who are receiving services through the agency.

**Item 17. Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents.** In responding to this item, the reviewer must determine what the individual needs of the child(ren) and family are in relation to case goals or the agency's involvement with them. The needs of foster parents refer to what they need in order to provide appropriate care and supervision to the child in their home, if the child is in foster care. The reviewer must then identify which services are being provided and determine whether those services are appropriately matched to the identified needs. The reviewer should note, in particular, whether or not community-based family support services, time-limited family reunification services, and adoption promotion and support services are needed and, if so, provided. The exploratory issues raise questions about the availability and accessibility of services in determining their appropriateness. Note: For foster care cases where the child is in a preadoptive home with termination of parental rights or relinquishment for adoption having been achieved, the adoptive family is considered the child's "family" for purposes of this question.

**Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning.** The reviewer will need to determine the ability of the child(ren) to participate actively in case planning activities. While this capacity will vary among children, most school-age children can generally be expected to participate to some extent if they are verbal and can understand most of the events occurring in their lives. In determining the level of participation by both parents and children, the reviewer must identify the specific activities in which they have input, e.g., identifying strengths and needs, requesting services and service providers, establishing goals in case plans, evaluating progress toward goals, attendance at case planning meetings, and so forth. Barriers to optimal participation should also be identified. This item is used, in part, to determine the agency's substantial conformity with regulatory requirements that the case plan be developed jointly with the parents. Item 18(b) is to be completed for children in foster care.

**Items 19 and 20. Worker visits with child and worker visits with parents.** Visits are defined as face-to-face contacts between the worker and parent or child. Reviewers should determine the most typical pattern of visiting, since the actual frequency may vary from time to time. Where visits occur infrequently, the reviewer should use the exploratory issues to determine barriers to more frequent visiting.

**Item 21. Educational needs of the child.** Questions A and B apply to the child in foster care. If the instrument is being completed on a family receiving inhome services, the reviewer should respond to question B only. Only those changes in schools resulting from the child's placement in foster care should be recorded in this item, not changes that would normally occur such as movement of a child from elementary to middle school to high school. In responding to this item, the reviewer will need to determine whether the child has any identified educational needs that should be addressed through appropriate services. The term "early intervention" refers to early intervention programs operated by the State's education system for infants and toddlers who have developmental delays (pursuant to Public Law 105-17, the 1997 IDEA Amendments, at 34 CFR Part 303).

**Item 22. Physical health of the child.** Questions A and B apply to the child in foster care. If the instrument is being completed on a family receiving inhome services, the reviewer should respond to question B only. Health care screenings in this item refer to Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment (EPSDT) or other comprehensive medical examinations. Preventive health and dental care refers to both the initial and periodic age-appropriate examinations and maintenance procedures designed to avoid, detect and treat health or dental problems. Where children have specific health or dental problems, the reviewer must determine whether the child is receiving medical care to address the needs.

**Item 23. Mental health of the child.** Questions A and B apply to the child in foster care and may be answered regardless of whether the State has guidelines that require initial mental health evaluations upon a child's entry into foster care or specify timeframes for conducting them. If the instrument is being completed on a family receiving inhome services, the reviewer should respond to question B only. Mental health screening or assessment refers to a psychological or medical evaluation designed to detect mental, emotional, social, or psychological needs of the child that should be addressed through appropriate services. For children who have specific mental health needs, the reviewer must determine whether services are being provided that appropriately address the identified needs.

# **Appendix D**

## **Stakeholder Interview Guide**



## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW GUIDE

OMB Control No: 0970-0214

Expiration date: 04/30/2003

### **General Instructions**

Stakeholder interviews will be conducted in the local review sites and at the State level. Those individuals to be interviewed are selected from the stakeholders who participated in the development of the State's Child and Family Services Plan (CFSP) required at 45 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1357.15(1), including courts, administrative review bodies, children's guardians ad litem, and other individuals or bodies assigned responsibility for representing the best interests of the child. The following core stakeholders must be interviewed:

#### **State Stakeholders**

State child welfare director  
State child welfare program specialists  
State court system representative  
Major tribal representatives  
State administrative review bodies

#### **Local Stakeholders**

Local child welfare agency administrator  
Foster parent(s)  
Juvenile court judge  
Law enforcement representative  
Social worker(s) from the local agency  
Guardian(s) ad litem  
Local administrative review bodies

- Additional stakeholders at both State and local levels may be interviewed, as needed. The various types of additional stakeholder representatives who may be interviewed are listed in the review procedures manual.
- This interview guide identifies core questions that should be covered in stakeholder interviews in each review site. While each individual stakeholder may not be able to address each core question, the combination of interviews in each site should cover the core questions. Following each core question is a list of possible stakeholders who may be able to address the particular issue. However, reviewers will need to make judgments about which of the questions to be covered should be pursued with each individual stakeholder.
- Each core question is followed by a list of exploratory issues that reviewers should pursue, as appropriate, in the interview. As with the core questions, some of the exploratory issues will be more or less applicable to individual stakeholders.
- In addition to the core questions, the Regional Office team leader, in collaboration with the State and the Central Office, will be responsible for identifying any State-specific issues from the statewide assessment that need further examination through stakeholder interviews in the onsite review and including those issues in section II of the Stakeholder Interview Guide.
- Notes from the interviews are recorded on the Stakeholder Interview Guide forms. Notes from all stakeholder interviews are summarized by the reviewer on a single form. The forms are used by the review team to complete the Summary of Findings Form at the end of the onsite review. The forms must be submitted to the designated team member at the end of the onsite review.
- Interviews should be kept to around an hour in length.

THE PAPERWORK REDUCTION ACT OF 1995 (Pub. L. 104-13):

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, conducting interviews, and reviewing the collection of information. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

August 2000

## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW GUIDE

A. Interviewer(s):

B. Dates of Interviews:

C. County and State Reviewed:

### Persons or Groups Interviewed

Name of Person or Group Interviewed

Title

Type of  
Stakeholder

State

Local



**Item 1. Safety Outcomes for Children (All stakeholders)**

**Core Question:** Describe the extent to which services provided by the agency to children for whom the agency has care or custody help ensure that they are safe and protected from abuse and neglect and that their safety and health are the primary concerns in the agency's interventions.

**Exploratory Issues**

- How does the agency address health and safety as the primary concerns in placement and reunification decisions?
- How is the safety of children in foster care placement addressed?
- How effective is the agency in identifying and responding to factors that place children at risk of maltreatment?
- What is the agency's capacity to respond timely and effectively to incoming reports of child maltreatment?
- How effective are the agency's interventions in protecting children from maltreatment?

**Item 2. Permanency Outcomes for Children (All stakeholders)**

**Core Question:** Describe the extent to which children in foster care achieve permanency and stability in their living situations and reach their designated permanency goals in a timely manner.

**Exploratory Issues**

- What process does the agency use to determine whether children in care for 15 of the past 22 months should have parental rights terminated or have an exception made?
- Under what circumstances are exceptions made to the termination of parental rights (TPR) requirements?
- How does the agency engage in concurrent planning and what are the results?
- What services are in place to help children in care achieve permanency in a timely manner?
- What measures are in place to remove barriers to interjurisdictional adoptions?
- For children experiencing delays in foster care or adoptive placements, to what are the delays attributable?

**Item 3. Well-Being Outcomes for Children and Families (All stakeholders)**

**Core Question:** Describe the extent to which families are supported to meet the needs of their children and the educational, emotional, mental, and physical health needs of children are adequately addressed through the agency's interventions.

**Exploratory Issues**

- In what ways do children and their parents or guardians participate in case planning activities with the agency?
- How are the educational needs of children in the agency's care or responsibility routinely addressed through case planning or collaboration with the education system?
- What measures are in place to ensure that the physical health and medical needs of children in the agency's care or responsibility are identified and addressed?
- What measures are in place to ensure that the emotional and mental health needs of children in the agency's care or responsibility are identified and addressed?

**Item 4. Agency Responsiveness to Community (State and county agency staff, external stakeholders)**

**Core Question:** Describe the agency's responsiveness to expectations and needs of this community (or State if interviewing State-level stakeholder) as they relate to the agency's mission.

**Exploratory Issues**

- What are the strengths and needs of the agency's ability to respond to the community's (State's) expectations about protecting children from maltreatment?
- How effective is the agency in serving all relevant populations in the community (State), e.g., racial and ethnic groups, age groups, rural vs. urban populations?
- In what ways does the agency collaborate with other child- and family-serving agencies in the community (State), particularly those serving the same populations of children and families as the agency?
- How does the agency incorporate input from community (State) stakeholders into its planning, policies, and practices?
- How does the community view the agency's mission?

**Item 5. Information System Capacity (State and county agency staff)**

**Core Question:** Describe the capacity of the State (or county) agency's information system to support the work of staff at the local level (State and local levels, if interviewing State-level staff).

**Exploratory Issues**

- How adequate is the information provided through the information system in assisting workers, supervisors, and managers in their daily work?
- What is the capacity of the information system to determine status, demographics, location, and goals for all children in foster care in the county (or State)?
- What is the capacity to identify and track children and families served in programs other than foster care, e.g., Child Protective Services (CPS), inhome services?
- How uniform is the State's information system capacity on a statewide basis?
- What are the gaps/needs in the information system from both local and State perspectives?

**Item 6. Quality Assurance (State and county agency staff)**

**Core Question:** Describe the effectiveness of the agency's provisions for quality assurance in promoting satisfactory outcomes for children and families.

**Exploratory Issues**

- Describe the agency's standards that ensure that children in foster care placements are provided quality services that protect their health and safety?
- How does the agency monitor implementation and compliance with the standards?
- Describe the agency's quality assurance system for child welfare services.
- How effective are the county agency's (or State's) quality assurance measures in:
  - Helping ensure that children in the county (or State) are protected from maltreatment?
  - Helping ensure that children in foster care achieve permanency on a timely basis?
  - Involving individuals outside the county (or State) agency in evaluating outcomes for children and families, e.g., service recipients, service providers, advocates, etc.?
- What is the reporting and evaluation capacity of the quality assurance system?

**Item 7. Staff and Provider Training (State and county agency staff, local external stakeholders)**

**Core Question:** Describe the extent to which staff of the agency and service providers, particularly foster families, are trained and prepared to carry out the agency's mission and help families and children achieve satisfactory outcomes.

**Exploratory Issues**

- What are the strengths and needs of the training provided to:
  - Agency staff (at all levels) in preparing them to work with families and children or otherwise carry out the agency's mission?
  - Foster and adoptive parents in preparing them to work with children and their families and with staff of the agency and to prepare them to care for children placed in their homes?
  - Other service providers used by the agency in preparing them to work with children and families in a manner that is consistent with the agency's mission and goals?
- What is the level of consistency of the training curricula used by the agency with the agency's goals in the community or State?
- Are there differences between preservice and inservice training for staff and providers?

**Item 8. Foster and Adoptive Home Licensing/Approval/Recruitment (State and county agency staff, selected external stakeholders, e.g., foster parents, court, service providers)**

**Core Question:** Describe the effectiveness of the agency's provisions for licensing or approving and recruiting foster and adoptive homes to help provide protection and permanency for children in out-of-home care.

**Exploratory Issues**

- How sufficient is the county's (or State's) current pool of foster and adoptive families to meet the placement needs of children in the county (or State), including numbers, locations, and capacity to parent the children in need of placement?
- How adequate are the numbers and training of staff who perform licensing and recruitment functions?
- What are the effects of the agency's (county or State) standards/licensing requirements on protection and permanency for children in out-of-home care?
- How does the agency recruit foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State in need of placement?
- To what extent do the agency's licensing standards reflect national standards?
- Are the same standards applied equally to all licensed/approved foster homes?
- How does the agency recruit adoptive families across State lines or other jurisdictions?
- How effectively has the State implemented the provisions for criminal background clearances on all foster and adoptive families licensed or approved by the agency or used as resources for children in the State's care and custody?



**Item 9. Case Review System (State and county agency staff, selected local external stakeholders, e.g., foster parents, court, attorneys, advocates, foster care review board members)**

**Core Question:** Describe the effectiveness of the current provisions in place in the county (or State) for reviewing cases of children in foster care, including relative placements, who are in the agency's custody or supervision.

**Exploratory Issues**

- Do all children have case plans reflecting most appropriate placements in their best interests and in close proximity to parents?
- Are children placed out of State visited by their caseworkers at least once each 12 months?
- How effective are the periodic reviews and permanency hearings in the county (or State) in promoting permanency for children in foster care, including children in relative placements?
- What factors affect the agency's substantial conformity with requirements for the frequency and content of hearings and reviews?
- What is the level of participation by children, families, foster families, and preadoptive families in hearings, including provisions for notifying them of reviews and hearings, changes in placements and visiting arrangements?

**Item 10. Service Array (State and county agency staff, external stakeholders)**

**Core Question:** Describe the capacity of the current array of services in the county (or State) to meet the individual needs of children and families served by the agency.

**Exploratory Issues**

- What are the strengths and gaps in the current array of services in the county (or State) to meet the needs of children and families served by the agency?
- How effectively does the current service array respond to the individual needs of children and families, as opposed to providing the same level and type of service to all?
- To what extent are services available and accessible to families and children in their own homes and in the communities where they live (for County stakeholder interviews)?
- Describe the services designed specifically to ensure the health and safety of children.
- Describe the services designed specifically to promote permanency for children, including adoption support and promotion.
- Describe the services designed to promote reunification of children with their families.

STATE-SPECIFIC ISSUES

Item 11.
Core Question:
Exploratory Issues

Item 12.
Core Question:
Exploratory Issues

<b>Item 13.</b>
<b>Core Question:</b>
<b>Exploratory Issues</b>

<b>Item 14.</b>
<b>Core Question:</b>
<b>Exploratory Issues</b>

## **Appendix E**

### **Preparation for Interview and Sample Confirmation Letter**



## Preparation for Interviews

Persons with whom interviews are requested should be given basic information about the purpose of the review, the reason they are being asked to participate, and the expected content of the interview. The following information may be useful to State and local agency staff who are arranging the interviews.

**Purpose of the review.** The review of child and family services programs in all States is a responsibility of the Federal government. All State programs are reviewed periodically for an assessment of how well they are functioning in relation to the needs of the families and children they serve. The reviews are intended to cover the range of services provided by the State or local agency, including family preservation, child protective services, foster care, and adoption. The reviews will identify the areas of the programs that are functioning particularly well, as well as those in need of improvement. The Federal government will work with States to improve areas of need as identified in the reviews.

**Reason for conducting interviews.** In order to determine how well the State or local agency is functioning, interviews are being scheduled with the people who know the systems best, that is, the families and children who receive or have received services from the agency, the service providers and community representatives who work with the agency in delivering services, employees of the agency, and representatives of other agencies and professions with close ties to the child and family services programs.

**Content of the interviews.** One or two members of the team of Federal and State reviewers in local sites will conduct the interview. Families and children who have received services from the agency will be asked whether the services they received have helped them with their needs, whether they have been able to reach their goals, how they have participated in case planning activities, and other general matters relating to their safety, permanency, and well-being. Service providers and other State representatives will be asked questions regarding their involvement in the agency's programs, systemic issues that affect service delivery or outcomes, and whether services and agency programs are achieving their objectives. Information from the interviews will be used collectively to report the findings, and comments will not be attributed to specific individuals. The participation of all persons in the interviews is entirely voluntary. Persons asked to participate in interviews, particularly families and children receiving services, should understand that there will be no adverse consequences if they choose not to participate.

The confirmation letter on the following page may be used to confirm scheduled interviews and help prepare the persons with whom interviews are scheduled.

## **Sample Interview Confirmation Letter**

**Instructions:** Print this letter on agency letterhead and send to persons with scheduled interviews at least 2 weeks prior to the onsite review. The letter should be signed by the State or local coordinator or the coordinator's designee. Reasonable revisions to the letter may be made, in keeping with the basic content and purpose of the letter and review.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the review of the family and children's services program in (State) \_\_\_\_\_. Your interview is scheduled for (time) \_\_\_\_\_ on (date) \_\_\_\_\_ at (location) \_\_\_\_\_. If this appointment is unsatisfactory or you find that you will be unable to be interviewed at this time, please notify me as soon as possible at (phone number) \_\_\_\_\_.

To confirm the purpose of the interview, the Federal and State governments are jointly reviewing the child and family services programs in our State. In accordance with Federal law and regulation, similar reviews are conducted in all States periodically as a means of identifying the strengths of State programs and areas where improvements are needed. The review will focus on program areas that include child protective services, foster care, adoption, family preservation, and family support.

As part of the review, members of the Federal-State review team will conduct interviews with individuals and families who are receiving or have received services from this agency, with service providers, and with various professional and community representatives who share an interest in the public family and children's services programs in our State. The interviews should not last more than 1 hour and will focus on the quality of services provided, the outcomes of services, and the needs of the families served by the programs.

Information obtained from the interviews will be used in preparing a report on the status of the State's programs. The comments of individuals interviewed will not be identified by name, but will be used in summary form to describe the findings of the review. Your participation in the review is entirely voluntary. Individuals who choose not to be interviewed will not suffer any adverse effects to the services they now receive or may receive in the future due to the refusal to be interviewed.

Thank you again for your assistance in this important review.



# **Appendix F**

## **Summary of Findings Form**



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FORM

**Purpose.** The purposes of this form include the following:

- To provide a preliminary assessment of the strengths and needs of the State's child and family services system prior to the onsite review, by analyzing information from the State's CFSP and Statewide Assessment on the form
  - To provide a format for each local review team to identify its collective findings based on the activities conducted by the team in a particular review site
  - To provide a format for recording information obtained during the onsite review applicable to the outcomes and systemic factors being reviewed, including information obtained from case reviews and stakeholder interviews
  - To provide a format for all the local review teams to consolidate their information into one comprehensive report to the State agency
  - When completed, following the onsite review, to serve as the final report of the review to the State agency that includes the summary of the review findings and the determination of substantial conformity
- 
- **Organization.** The form includes sections for each of the three outcome areas and each of the seven systemic areas being reviewed. For each outcome listed, subsections are provided to record the number of cases reviewed by the team according to the degree to which the outcome was determined by the reviewers to be achieved, followed by a list of each indicator used to evaluate the outcome. For each systemic factor listed, subsections are provided to record the State's substantial conformity, or lack thereof, followed by the State plan requirements used to evaluate each systemic factor. The form also includes sections used to record areas determined by the review team to be operating in substantial conformity with applicable State plan requirements and those determined not to be in substantial conformity.
  - **Instructions.** Each review team member should receive a copy of the form that includes the preliminary assessment information. However, each local review team will submit only one completed form that includes the results of the local team's findings of the onsite review as compiled at the local team's final debriefing. The local team leader must ensure that the form is completed and submitted by the end of the onsite review. For each outcome (sections I–III), the team should record the number of cases they reviewed in which that particular outcome was determined to be substantially achieved, partially achieved or not being achieved or addressed by the agency under review. Each systemic factor (sections IV–X) should be marked by the team as substantially conforming to State plan requirements or not substantially conforming. Each performance indicator (items 1–45) following the outcomes and systemic factors should be judged by the team as primarily a strength or primarily an area needing improvement, recognizing there may be some identified strengths and needs within any one indicator. The basis for rating each performance indicator should be specific, should substantiate the rating, and should note the source of the information, i.e., case reviews, stakeholder interviews, or the self-assessment. In the debriefing of the entire State review team near the conclusion of the onsite review, the team should complete one consolidated form that incorporates the findings of each local team and includes and addresses the information on the preliminary assessment. The team should complete the final two sections of the form (sections XI and XII), indicating those areas determined to be operating in substantial conformity with applicable requirements and those areas not in substantial conformity. The team will identify the specific performance indicators needing improvement in each area determined not to be in substantial conformity, to assist the State in developing its program improvement plan. Following the onsite review, the Regional Office review team leader will refine and supplement the form as needed, verify the areas of nonconformity, and submit the completed form to the State agency as the final report of the review.

## I. SAFETY

<b>Outcome S1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Team 1</b>	<b>Team 2</b>	<b>Team 3</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:					
Partially Achieved:					
Not Achieved or Addressed:					
Not Applicable:					
<b>Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:</b>					
	<b>National Standard</b>	<b>State's Percentage</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Standard</b>	
Repeat maltreatment					
Maltreatment of children in foster care					

### Item 1. Timeliness of initiating investigations of reports of child maltreatment

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 2. Repeat maltreatment**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

<b>Outcome S2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Team 1</b>	<b>Team 2</b>	<b>Team 3</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:					
Partially Achieved:					
Not Achieved or Addressed:					
Not Applicable:					

**Item 3. Services to family to protect child(ren) in home and prevent removal**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 4. Risk of harm to child**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**II. PERMANENCY**

<b>Outcome P1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Team 1</b>	<b>Team 2</b>	<b>Team 3</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:					
Partially Achieved:					
Not Achieved or Addressed:					
Not Applicable:					
<b>Conformity of Statewide data indicators with national standards:</b>					
	<b>National Standard</b>	<b>State's Percentage</b>	<b>Meets Standard</b>	<b>Does Not Meet Standard</b>	
Foster care re-entries					
Length of time to achieve reunification					
Length of time to achieve adoption					
Stability of foster care placements					
Length of stay in foster care*					

\*Not used to determine substantial conformity.

**Item 5. Foster care re-entries**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 6. Stability of foster care placement**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 7. Permanency goal for child**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 8. Independent living services**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 9. Adoption**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 10. Permanency goal of other planned permanent living arrangement**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:



<b>Outcome P2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Team 1</b>	<b>Team 2</b>	<b>Team 3</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:					
Partially Achieved:					
Not Achieved or Addressed:					
Not Applicable:					

**Item 11. Proximity of foster care placement**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 12. Placement with siblings**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 13. Visiting with parents and siblings in foster care**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 14. Preserving connections**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 15. Relative placement**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 16. Relationship of child in care with parents**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**III. CHILD AND FAMILY WELL-BEING**

<b>Outcome WB1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Team 1</b>	<b>Team 2</b>	<b>Team 3</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:					
Partially Achieved:					
Not Achieved or Addressed:					
Not Applicable:					

**Item 17. Needs and services of child, parents, foster parents**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 18. Child and family involvement in case planning**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 19. Worker visits with child**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 20. Worker visits with parents**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

<b>Outcome WB2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Team 1</b>	<b>Team 2</b>	<b>Team 3</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:					
Partially Achieved:					
Not Achieved or Addressed:					
Not Applicable:					

**Item 21. Educational needs of the child**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

<b>Outcome WB3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.</b>					
<b>Number of cases reviewed by the team according to degree of outcome achievement:</b>					
	<b>Team 1</b>	<b>Team 2</b>	<b>Team 3</b>	<b>Total Number</b>	<b>Total Percentage</b>
Substantially Achieved:					
Partially Achieved:					
Not Achieved or Addressed:					
Not Applicable:					

**Item 22. Physical health of the child**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 23. Mental health of the child**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

#### IV. STATEWIDE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4

**Item 24. State is operating a Statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

## V. CASE REVIEW SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4

**Item 25. Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions.**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 26. Provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child, no less frequently than once every 6 months, either by a court or by administrative review.**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:



**Item 27. Provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 28. Provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 29. Provides a process for foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care to be notified of, and have an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

## VI. QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4

**Item 30. The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children.**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 31. The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

## VII. TRAINING

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4

**Item 32. The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services.**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 33. The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP.**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 34. The State provides training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

## VIII. SERVICE ARRAY

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4

**Item 35. The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 36. The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the State's CFSP.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 37. The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families served by the agency.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

## IX. AGENCY RESPONSIVENESS TO THE COMMUNITY

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4

**Item 38. In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child- and family-serving agencies and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP.**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 39. The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP.**

\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 40. The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**X. FOSTER AND ADOPTIVE PARENT LICENSING, RECRUITMENT, AND RETENTION**

Rating of Review Team Regarding Substantial Conformity				
Rating	Not in Substantial Conformity		Substantial Conformity	
	1	2	3	4

**Item 41. The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions which are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 42. The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 43. The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

**Item 44. The State has in place a process for ensuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:



**Item 45. The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.**

\_\_\_\_\_ Strength      \_\_\_\_\_ Area Needing Improvement

Basis:

## XI. DETERMINATION OF SUBSTANTIAL CONFORMITY

For each outcome and systemic factor listed below, mark “Y” where the State is determined to be in substantial conformity and “N” where the State is determined not to be in substantial conformity. For each outcome or systemic factor marked “N,” place a check beside the performance indicator, listed by item number in this form, that has been determined to be an area needing improvement.

### Safety

\_\_\_\_\_ Outcome S1

\_\_\_\_\_ Item 1  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 2

\_\_\_\_\_ Outcome S2

\_\_\_\_\_ Item 3  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 4

### Permanency

\_\_\_\_\_ Outcome P1

\_\_\_\_\_ Item 5  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 6  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 7  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 8  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 9  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 10

\_\_\_\_\_ Outcome P2

\_\_\_\_\_ Item 11  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 12  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 13  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 14  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 15  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 16

### Child and Family Well-Being

\_\_\_\_\_ Outcome WB1

\_\_\_\_\_ Item 17  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 18  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 19  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 20

\_\_\_\_\_ Outcome WB2

\_\_\_\_\_ Item 21

\_\_\_\_\_ Outcome WB3

\_\_\_\_\_ Item 22  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 23

### Systemic Factors

\_\_\_\_\_ Statewide Information System

\_\_\_\_\_ Item 24

\_\_\_\_\_ Case Review System

\_\_\_\_\_ Item 25  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 26  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 27  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 28  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 29

\_\_\_\_\_ Quality Assurance System

\_\_\_\_\_ Item 30  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 31  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 32  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 33  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 34

\_\_\_\_\_ Service Array

\_\_\_\_\_ Item 35  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 36  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 37

\_\_\_\_\_ Agency Responsiveness to the  
Community

\_\_\_\_\_ Item 38  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 39  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 40

\_\_\_\_\_ Foster and Adoptive Parent  
Licensing, Recruitment, and  
Retention

\_\_\_\_\_ Item 41  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 42  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 43  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 44  
\_\_\_\_\_ Item 45

# **Appendix G**

## **Sample Review Week Schedule**



## **Sample Review Week Agenda**

### **Monday**

8:00-9:00 a.m.	Entrance conference in central site (optional, depending upon logistical issues)
9:00-11:30 a.m.	Review team orientation if needed (only if this has not been done prior to the review week)
11:30-12:00 Noon	Local teams meet informally
12:00-1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00-4:00 p.m.	Team members travel to local review sites (if teams have not reported to their sites already)  Team members remaining in central site conduct local entrance conference and begin review activities
4:00-5:00 p.m.	Local entrance conferences
5:00-6:30 p.m.	Local team briefing (if review activities have been initiated)

[NOTE: In some States, rather than the review team's convening centrally at the beginning of the review week, team members may travel directly to their local review sites and begin review activities immediately on Monday morning. In that situation, a brief informal entrance conference with local staff may be held first thing, followed by a meeting of the local review team to receive instructions and orientation, followed by the beginning of case reviews and interviews.]

### **Tuesday**

8:00-5:00 p.m.	Local review activities, beginning with reading case records State stakeholder interviews
5:00-6:30 p.m.	Local team briefing

### **Wednesday**

8:00-5:00 p.m.	Local review activities State stakeholder interviews
5:00-6:30 p.m.	Local team briefing

**Thursday**

8:00 a.m.-12:00 noon	Complete local review activities
1:00-4:00 p.m.	Local team briefing
4:00-4:30 p.m.	Local exit conference
4:30 p.m.	Team members travel to central site for briefing with entire team

**Friday**

8:00 a.m.-12:00 noon	Entire team briefing
1:00-2:00 p.m.	Exit conference in central site

## **Sample Review Schedule For Individual Team Members**

### **Day One**

8:00-9:00 a.m.:	Local entrance conference (location)
9:00-11:30 a.m.:	Case record reviews (adjust length of time as needed) Case A (List type of case and names of social worker, family members, and service providers)
11:30-12:30 p.m.:	Lunch (flexible, depending upon interview schedule)
12:30-1:30 p.m.:	Interview with social worker for Case A (location)
1:45-2:45 p.m.:	Case interview in Case A (if not in office, allow travel time)
2:45-3:00 p.m.:	Travel time (adjust as needed, depending upon location of next interview)
3:00-3:45 p.m.:	Stakeholder or Case Interview (For all interviews scheduled, specify type of interview and list name, address, phone number, location of interview, and directions if needed)
3:45-4:00 p.m.:	Travel time
4:00-5:00 p.m.:	Stakeholder or Case Interview
5:00-6:30 p.m.:	Team briefing

**Repeat agenda for each day reviewers will be in the local agency, noting the following possible agenda items:**

- Small group meetings with staff or other stakeholders during the evening, regular work hours, or lunch.
- Any unscheduled time slots will be used by reviewers to complete case record reviews, summarize notes and so forth, or to participate in other stakeholder interviews or focus groups.
- At least 1.5 hours per day should be clear on all the reviewers' schedules at the same time for team briefings following the completion of the day's review activities.





## **Appendix H**

### **Information Packages for Review Team Members**



## **Information Checklist for Review Team Members**

**The following information should be transmitted to each review team member prior to the onsite review:**

- ☐ Time, dates, locations of entrance conference and other review week activities
- ☐ Preliminary agenda for the review week
- ☐ Travel arrangements and plans
- ☐ Reimbursement of expenses information (for contract/peer reviewers)
- ☐ Hotel information (name, location, directions, confirmation, cost, phone and fax numbers)
- ☐ List of review team members with names, phone numbers, affiliations
- ☐ List of review team member responsibilities
- ☐ Copy of Statewide Assessment
- ☐ Copy of Preliminary Assessment
- ☐ Copy of State's policies relevant to the review



# **Appendix I**

## **Pathway to Substantial Conformity**



## Pathway to Substantial Conformity

Outcomes and Systemic Factors	Performance Indicator	How Indicators Are Rated	Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases	Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency	Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)	Penalties
Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect.	Timeliness of Initiating Investigations of Reports of Child Maltreatment – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	Both onsite indicators must be rated strengths in the case reviewed.	In 95% of the cases reviewed (90% on the initial review), this outcome must be rated “substantially achieved,” plus the statewide data indicators must meet the national standards.	If the outcome is not determined to be substantially achieved, the PIP must include measures to bring the outcome up to substantial achievement and measures to bring the statewide data indicators up to the national standard (or the amount of progress negotiated by the State and the Regional Office). Safety outcomes determined not to be in substantial conformity must be given priority in the PIP and addressed in less than 2 years.	A 1% penalty (increased to 2% & 3% in subsequent reviews for continuous non-conformity) is applied to the outcome if determined not to be in substantial conformity. The penalty applies until the outcome is determined to be in substantial conformity. Penalties will be withheld at the point the State fails to meet approved timeframes or benchmarks of progress in the PIP.
	Recurrence of Maltreatment – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	Recurrence of Maltreatment – statewide data	National Standard				
	Incidence of Child Abuse and/or Neglect in Foster Care – statewide data	National Standard				

<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators Are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Safety Outcome 2: Children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.	Services to Family to Protect Children in Home and Prevent Removal – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	Both onsite indicators must be rated strengths in the case reviewed.	In 95% of the cases reviewed (90% on the first review), this outcome must be rated “substantially achieved,” plus all of the statewide data indicators must meet the national standards.	Same as Safety Outcome 1 above.	Same as above.
	Current Risk of Harm to Child – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				



<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators Are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations.	Foster Care Re-entries – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	No more than one of the six onsite indicators may be rated an “area needing improvement” (not all six onsite indicators will apply to every case, so we cannot say 5 out of 6 must be considered a “strength.”)	In 95% of the cases reviewed (90% on the first review), this outcome must be rated “substantially achieved,” plus all of the statewide data indicators must meet the standard.	If the outcome is not determined to be substantially achieved, the PIP must include measures to bring the outcome up to substantial achievement and measures to bring the statewide data indicators up to the national standard (or the amount of progress negotiated by the State and the Regional Office).	Same as above.
	Foster Care Re-entries – statewide data	National Standard				
	Stability of Foster Care Placement – statewide data	National Standard				
	Stability of Foster Care Placement– on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	Length of Time to Achieve Permanency Goal of Reunification – statewide data	National Standard				

<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators Are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations (continued).	Length of Time to Achieve Permanency Goal of Adoption – statewide data	National Standard	No more than one of the six onsite indicators may be rated an “area needing improvement” (not all six onsite indicators will apply to every case, so we cannot say 5 out of 6 must be considered a “strength.”)	In 95% of the cases reviewed (90% on the first review), this outcome must be rated “substantially achieved,” plus all of the statewide data indicators must meet the standard.	If the outcome is not determined to be substantially achieved, the PIP must include measures to bring the outcome up to substantial achievement and measures to bring the statewide data indicators up to the national standard (or the amount of progress negotiated by the State and the Regional Office).	Same as above.
	Permanency Goal for Child – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	Independent Living Services – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	Achievement of Adoption – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	Permanency Goal of Other Planned Permanent Living Arrangement – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				

<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators Are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
<p>Permanency Outcome 2: The continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.</p>	Proximity of current placement – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	<p>No more than one of the six indicators may be rated an “area needing improvement” (not all six onsite indicators will apply to every case, so we cannot say 5 out of 6 must be considered a “strength.”)</p>	<p>In 95% of the cases reviewed (90% on the first review), this outcome must be rated “substantially achieved,” plus both of the statewide data indicators must meet the standard.</p>	<p>If the outcome is not determined to be substantially achieved, the PIP must include measures to bring the outcome up to substantial achievement.</p>	<p>Same as above.</p>
	Placement With Siblings – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	Visiting with Parents and Siblings in Foster Care – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	Preserving Connections – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	Relative Placement – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	Current Relationship of Child in Care with Parents – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				

<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators Are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Well-Being Outcome 1: Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs.	Needs and Services of Child, Parents, Foster Parents – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	No more than one of the five indicators may be rated an “area needing improvement” (not all five onsite indicators will apply to every case, so we cannot say 4 out of 5 must be considered a “strength.”)	This outcome will be rated on the basis of the onsite review. In 95% of the cases reviewed (90% on the first review), this outcome must be rated “substantially achieved.”	If the outcome is not determined to be substantially achieved, the PIP must include measures to bring the outcome up to substantial achievement.	Same as above.
	Child and Family Involvement in Case Planning – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	Worker Visits With Child – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	Worker Visits with Parents – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				

<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Well-Being Outcome 2: Children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs.	Educational Needs of the Child – on site	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	The indicator must be rated a strength.	This outcome will be rated on the basis of the onsite review. In 95% of the cases reviewed (90% on the first review), this outcome must be rated “substantially achieved.”	If the outcome is not determined to be substantially achieved, the PIP must include measures to bring the outcome up to substantial achievement.	Same as above.
Well-Being Outcome 3: Children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.	Physical Health of the Child	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	Both indicators must be rated a strength.	This outcome will be rated on the basis of the onsite review. In 95% of the cases reviewed (90% on the first review), this outcome must be rated “substantially achieved.”	If the outcome is not determined to be substantially achieved, the PIP must include measures to bring the outcome up to substantial achievement.	Same as above.
	Mental Health of the Child	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				

<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators Are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Systemic Factor #1: Information System Capacity	State is operating a statewide information system that, at a minimum, can readily identify the status, demographic characteristics, location, and goals for the placement of every child who is (or within the immediately preceding 12 months, has been) in foster care.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	N/A - Not determined on individual cases, but for the State as a whole	There is one performance indicator associated with this systemic factor. In order for the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity, the performance indicator must be rated a 3 or 4.	If the systemic factor is determined not to be in substantial conformity, the PIP must include measures to bring the factor up to substantial conformity, based on the State plan requirements used to determine substantial conformity.	A 1% penalty (increased to 2% & 3% in subsequent reviews for continuous nonconformity) is applied to the systemic factor if determined not to be in substantial conformity. The penalty applies until the factor is determined to be substantially achieved. Penalties will be withheld at the point the State fails to meet approved timeframes or benchmarks of progress in the PIP.

<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators Are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Systemic Factor #2: Case Review System	Provides a process that ensures that each child has a written case plan to be developed jointly with the child's parent(s) that includes the required provisions	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	N/A	There are five performance indicators associated with this systemic factor. In order for the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity it must be rated a 3 or 4, meaning that all the performance indicators are in place and no more than one fails to function at the level described in each requirement.	If the systemic factor is not rated substantially achieved, the PIP must include measures to bring the factor up to standards.	Same as above.
	Provides a process for the periodic review of the status of each child no less frequently than once every 6 months either by a court or by administrative review.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	Provides a process that ensures that each child in foster care under the supervision of the State has a permanency hearing in a qualified court or administrative body no later than 12 months from the date the child entered foster care and no less frequently than every 12 months thereafter	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	Provides a process for termination of parental rights proceedings in accordance with the provisions of the Adoption and Safe Families Act.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				

<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators Are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Systemic Factor #2: Case Review System (continued)	Provides a process for foster parents, preadoptive parents, and relative caregivers of children in foster care being notified of, and having an opportunity to be heard in, any review or hearing held with respect to the child.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	N/A	There are five performance indicators associated with this systemic factor. In order for the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity it must be rated a 3 or 4, meaning that all the performance indicators are in place and no more than one fails to function at the level described in each requirement.	If the systemic factor is not rated substantially achieved, the PIP must include measures to bring the factor up to standards.	Same as above.



<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators Are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Systemic Factor #3: Quality Assurance	The State has developed and implemented standards to ensure that children in foster care placements are provided quality services that protect the safety and health of the children	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	N/A	There are two performance indicators associated with this systemic factor. In order for the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity it must be rated a 3 or 4, meaning that all the performance indicators are in place and no more than one fails to function at the level described in each requirement.	If the systemic factor is determined not to be in substantial conformity, the PIP must include measures to bring the factor up to substantial conformity, based on the State plan requirements used to determine substantial conformity.	Same as above.
	The State is operating an identifiable quality assurance system that is in place in the jurisdictions where the services included in the CFSP are provided, evaluates the quality of services, identifies strengths and needs of the service delivery system, provides relevant reports, and evaluates program improvement measures implemented.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				

<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators Are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Systemic Factor #4: Staff and Provider Training	The State is operating a staff development and training program that supports the goals and objectives in the CFSP, addresses services provided under titles IV-B and IV-E, and provides initial training for all staff who deliver these services.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	N/A	There are three performance indicators associated with this systemic factor. In order for the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity it must be rated a 3 or 4, meaning that all the performance indicators are in place and no more than one fails to function at the level described in each requirement.	If the systemic factor is determined not to be in substantial conformity, the PIP must include measures to bring the factor up to substantial conformity, based on the State plan requirements used to determine substantial conformity.	Same as above.
	The State provides for ongoing training for staff that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to the services included in the CFSP.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	The State provides short-term training for current or prospective foster parents, adoptive parents, and staff of State licensed or approved facilities that care for children receiving foster care or adoption assistance under title IV-E that addresses the skills and knowledge base needed to carry out their duties with regard to foster and adopted children.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				

<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators Are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Systemic Factor #5: Service Array	The State has in place an array of services that assess the strengths and needs of children and families and determine other service needs, address the needs of families in addition to individual children in order to create a safe home environment, enable children to remain safely with their parents when reasonable, and help children in foster and adoptive placements achieve permanency.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	N/A	There are three performance indicators associated with this systemic factor. In order for the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity it must be rated a 3 or 4, meaning that all the performance indicators are in place and no more than one fails to function at the level described in each requirement.	If the systemic factor is determined not to be in substantial conformity, the PIP must include measures to bring the factor up to substantial conformity, based on the State plan requirements used to determine substantial conformity.	Same as above.
	The services in item 35 are accessible to families and children in all political jurisdictions covered in the state's CFSP.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	The services in item 35 can be individualized to meet the unique needs of children and families	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				

<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators Are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Systemic Factor #6: Agency Responsiveness to Community	In implementing the provisions of the CFSP, the State engages in ongoing consultation with tribal representatives, consumers, service providers, foster care providers, the juvenile court, and other public and private child and family-serving agencies, and includes the major concerns of these representatives in the goals and objectives of the CFSP.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	N/A	There are three performance indicators associated with this systemic factor. In order for the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity it must be rated a 3 or 4, meaning that all the performance indicators are in place and no more than one fails to function at the level described in each requirement.	If the systemic factor is determined not to be in substantial conformity, the PIP must include measures to bring the factor up to substantial conformity, based on the State plan requirements used to determine substantial conformity.	Same as above.
	The agency develops, in consultation with these representatives, annual reports of progress and services delivered pursuant to the CFSP.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	The State's services under the CFSP are coordinated with services or benefits of other Federal or federally assisted programs serving the same population.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				

<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators Are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Systemic Factor #7: Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention	The State has implemented standards for foster family homes and child care institutions which are reasonably in accord with recommended national standards.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	N/A	There are five performance indicators associated with this systemic factor. In order for the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity it must be rated a 3 or 4, meaning that all the performance indicators are in place and no more than one fails to function at the level described in each requirement.	If the systemic factor is determined not to be in substantial conformity, the PIP must include measures to bring the factor up to substantial conformity, based on the State plan requirements used to determine substantial conformity.	Same as above.
	The standards are applied to all licensed or approved foster family homes or child care institutions receiving title IV-E or IV-B funds.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	The State complies with Federal requirements for criminal background clearances as related to licensing or approving foster care and adoptive placements and has in place a case planning process that includes provisions for addressing the safety of foster care and adoptive placements for children.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				
	The State has in place an identifiable process for assuring the diligent recruitment of potential foster and adoptive families that reflect the ethnic and racial diversity of children in the State for whom foster and adoptive homes are needed.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement				

<b>Outcomes and Systemic Factors</b>	<b>Performance Indicator</b>	<b>How Indicators Are Rated</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Achievement on Individual Cases</b>	<b>Determining Substantial Conformity for the State Agency</b>	<b>Program Improvement Plans (PIPs)</b>	<b>Penalties</b>
Systemic Factor #7: Foster and Adoptive Parent Licensing, Recruitment, and Retention (continued)	The State has in place a process for the effective use of cross-jurisdictional resources to facilitate timely adoptive or permanent placements for waiting children.	Strength or Area Needing Improvement	N/A	There are five performance indicators associated with this systemic factor. In order for the systemic factor to be in substantial conformity it must be rated a 3 or 4, meaning that all the performance indicators are in place and no more than one fails to function at the level described in each requirement.	If the systemic factor is determined not to be in substantial conformity, the PIP must include measures to bring the factor up to substantial conformity, based on the State plan requirements used to determine substantial conformity.	Same as above.

## **Appendix J**

### **Timeframes for Child and Family Services Review Activities**





## **Timeframes for Child and Family Services Review Activities**



### **9 months prior to onsite review:**

- Regional Office schedules a meeting or conference call with State to provide an overview of the review procedures and to discuss timeframes for review activities



### **8 months prior to onsite review:**

- State transmits to Regional Office an alternate source of data for use in preparing data profile for statewide assessment in the absence of AFCARS or NCANDS data
- Regional Office approves or disapproves alternate source of data
- Regional Office transmits alternate source of data to Children's Bureau (CB) data staff for use in preparing data profiles
- State identifies State members of review team who will participate in statewide assessment



### **7 months prior to onsite review:**

- CB data staff prepare data profiles for statewide assessment, including:
  - Safety profile based on NCANDS or alternate source provided by State and approved by Regional Office
  - Point-in-time permanency profile based on AFCARS data
  - First-time-entry cohort profile based on AFCARS data
- CB data staff transmit profiles to Regional Office
- Regional Office provides training/orientation on the statewide assessment to those State members of the team who will be completing the statewide assessment



### **6 months prior to onsite review:**

- Regional Office transmits data profiles and statewide assessment form to State for completion.
- State begins preparation of statewide assessment



**3–6 months prior to onsite review:**

- Regional Office collaborates with State on preparation of statewide assessment, including assisting in analysis and integration of data in the statewide assessment



**3–4 months prior to onsite review:**

- Regional Office identifies Federal members of review team
- Regional Office requests peer reviewers from contractor
- Regional Office requests draft of statewide assessment from State for review and comment prior to receiving final document



**2 months prior to onsite review:**

- State returns completed statewide assessment to Regional Office for approval
- Contractor provides names of peer reviewers to Regional Office



**45–60 days prior to onsite review:**

- Regional Office and State determine locations of onsite review sites in State
- Regional Office and State determine composition of sample of cases
- State provides listing of inhome service cases for selecting sample
- Regional Office transmits State's listing of inhome service cases to CB data staff and advises CB data staff on locations within State from which sample is to be selected
- State completes identification of State members of review team
- Regional Office requests copies of the State's policies relevant to the review for inclusion in packages to review team members
- CB data staff select sample of 150 foster care cases from the State's AFCARS data for the period under review (or other source approved by Regional Office) and 150 inhome service cases from listing of inhome cases provided by State



#### **30–45 days prior to onsite review:**

- CB data staff transmit sample listing to Regional Office
- Regional Office transmits sample listing to State
- State identifies sample of 30–50 cases from total sample listings of 150 foster care cases and 150 inhome service case listings and begins to set up case specific interviews and stakeholder interviews
- State and Federal members of the review team must be trained on instruments and review procedures
- Contractor provides training to peer reviewers (Note: peer reviewer training will be conducted on an annual schedule)



#### **30 days prior to onsite review:**

- Regional Office completes preliminary assessment, based on statewide assessment
- Regional Office transmits preliminary assessment and other information to contractor to disseminate to review team members



#### **2–3 weeks prior to review:**

- Contractor disseminates information packages to review team members
- State finalizes reviewer schedules that include case reviews, case-specific interviews, stakeholder interviews, entrance and exit conferences, and other scheduled meetings or activities



#### **Onsite Review**



#### **30 days following onsite review:**

- Regional Office transmits final report to State



**90 days following written receipt of notification of nonconformity by State:**

- State submits completed Program Improvement Plan (PIP) to Regional Office
- Regional Office reviews completed PIP for approval or disapproval
- Regional Office notifies State of approval or disapproval of PIP



**30 days following notification of disapproval of PIP by Regional Office:**

- State submits revised PIP to Regional Office

## **Appendix K**

### **Sample Introductory Language for Final Report**



## **Sample Introductory Language for Final Report**

The language below is an example of language that the Regional Offices may adapt for their use in the introduction section of the final child and family services reviews reports to States. Since the background information to describe the reviews will be the same across States, the Regional Offices will only need to add information that is State specific.

### **Introduction**

Pursuant to section 1123A of the act and 45 CFR 1355.31 through 1355.37, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) is charged with the review of State child and family services programs. The purpose of the reviews is to determine the States' substantial conformity with State plan requirements and other program requirements under titles IV-B and IV-E of the act.

The reviews cover the range of child and family services programs funded through titles IV-B and IV-E, including child protective services, foster care, adoption, independent living, and family support and preservation services. The review process is twofold. The first phase consists of a statewide assessment completed by the State and submitted to the ACF within the 6-month period preceding the onsite review. The statewide assessment includes data profiles on children in foster care and children served through the child protective service system that the State uses to evaluate its effectiveness in those areas. The second phase of the process is an onsite review that includes intensive reviews of a sample of cases and interviews with State and local stakeholders in the provider and service delivery community. Information from both phases of the process is used to determine the States' substantial conformity with the requirements under review.

The review process evaluates seven specific outcomes of services delivered to children and families, in the areas of safety, permanency, and child and family well-being. The outcomes are:

- Safety: (1) Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect and (2) children are safely maintained in their homes whenever possible and appropriate.
- Permanency: (1) Children have permanency and stability in their living situations and (2) the continuity of family relationships and connections is preserved for children.
- Child and Family Well-Being: (1) Families have enhanced capacity to provide for their children's needs, (2) children receive appropriate services to meet their educational needs, and (3) children receive adequate services to meet their physical and mental health needs.

Information from the statewide assessment and the onsite review of cases provides the basis for evaluating the achievement of the outcomes in the reviews.

In addition to reviewing for case outcomes, the review process also examines seven systemic factors that affect the States' capacity to deliver services in a manner that promotes positive outcomes for children and families. The systemic factors reviewed are (1) statewide information system, (2) case review system, (3) quality assurance, (4) training, (5) service array, (6) agency responsiveness to the community, and (7) foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention. Information from the statewide assessment and the onsite stakeholder interviews provides the basis for evaluating the systemic factors in the reviews.

In reviewing for outcomes and systemic factors, the review process is designed to identify both the strengths and areas needing improvement in the States' programs. For those areas in which the State is determined not to be operating in substantial conformity with requirements under review, the State has the opportunity to implement a program improvement plan designed to correct the area of nonconformity. Although the State is advised of applicable penalties associated with the degree of nonconformity, the penalties are not assessed until the State has had an opportunity to correct the area of nonconformity through the program improvement plan.

The review team that evaluates the States' performance consists of State and Federal staff, peer reviewers selected from a national pool of qualified reviewers, and State representatives who are not staff of the State or local agency being reviewed. In (NAME OF STATE), the review team members were: (LIST THE TEAM MEMBERS AND THEIR AFFILIATIONS)

The period of time covered in the child and family services review in (NAME OF STATE) was Federal fiscal year (YEAR AND DATES). The review process consisted of the following activities:

- The State completed the statewide assessment during the period of (DATES), in consultation with the ACF Regional Office.
- The State members of the review team and the ACF Regional Office selected three locations in the State for the onsite review activities: (LIST THE THREE SITES). The onsite review took place on (DATES OF ONSITE REVIEW).
- The joint State and Federal review team, consisting of (NUMBER) persons, was divided into three local teams for each of the three locations. The entire team examined (NUMBER) cases of children and families served by the agency, including interviews with the children, parents, foster parents, caseworkers, and service providers in each case. The team also conducted interviews with State and local stakeholders on the systemic factors under review in each location and for the State as a whole.
- The results of the statewide assessment, the onsite case reviews, and the stakeholder interviews were compiled by the review team into this report and used to make a determination about the State's substantial conformity with regard to each of the seven outcomes and each of the seven systemic factors.



The following report is a summary of the information obtained during the review pertaining to each outcome and systemic factor, and the performance indicators used to evaluate them.  
(INSERT FOR STATES DETERMINED NOT TO BE IN SUBSTANTIAL CONFORMITY):  
The ACF Regional Office will be working with the (NAME OF STATE AGENCY) to develop a program improvement plan that addresses those areas noted in the report that are not in substantial conformity.